

# THE INDEPENDENT

N° 8,176

TUESDAY 24 DECEMBER 1996

WEATHER: Fine but cold

(IR45P) 40p

## EXTRA-SPECIAL CHRISTMAS TABLOID

- ❖ Get the ultimate lingerie just in time
- ❖ Ski with Bridget Jones
- ❖ The Quiz; The Prizes; The Crosswords
- ❖ CHRISTMAS TELEVISION PULL-OUT

## Discovered: The first tourists to hit the West End

David Keys  
Archaeology Correspondent

Dramatic evidence of the first great Viking attacks on London has been unearthed by archaeologists digging at on the site of the extension to the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden.

Excavations have revealed a 190ft-long stretch of fortifications which once bristled with sharpened stakes on which the Londoners hoped the attacking Vikings would impale themselves.

Before the Viking attacks, most of London's 3,000-5,000 people lived in what is now the West End of the capital - not too many traffic jams then. Indeed, Londoners probably did not realise they were trying to protect themselves against a race which worshipped a version of Santa Claus - Odin used to fly on horseback distributing presents to children.

But the archaeological evidence suggests London's Anglo-Saxon defenders were more worried that the Vikings would engage in raping and pillaging. They built a rampart, probably complete with wooden palisade, and dug a 17ft-wide 7ft-deep V-shaped ditch, the inner face of which was arrayed with lethal wooden stakes.

The Covent Garden discoveries suggest that at the time of the first Viking assault, Anglo-Saxon London, known as Lundenwic, was defended by up to two-thirds of a mile of defences. The first Viking attack occurred in AD842 and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle says there was a "great slaughter" in London. Tragically, it seems the defences being unearthed by the archaeologists were not strong enough to hold back the invaders.

Evidence from the excavations reveals at least part of Lundenwic was abandoned at this time. Evidence of occupation in the Covent Garden area appears to cease in the 840s. And archaeologists have found several burned buildings, some of which may have been destroyed during the attack.

Viking raids continued in the London and Home Counties area for decades, and the insecurity caused some wealthier Londoners to hide their money, by burying it in the ground.

Just such a cache, the fourth central-London coin hoard known from this period, has been unearthed in the Covent Garden excavation.

Unusually, it consisted of 23 silver alloy coins minted in the kingdom of Northumbria in the 840s, and it probably belonged to an Anglo-Saxon merchant who hid it in the 850s or 860s and presumably perished before he could retrieve it.

The Covent Garden excavation, led by the Museum of London archaeologists Gordon Malcolm, David Bowsher and Bob Cowie, is also yielding an unprecedented quantity of information about early Anglo-Saxon London.

About 2,500 square metres of Anglo-Saxon Lundenwic have now been excavated at the Opera House site, an archaeological investigation which has produced 3,000 pottery shards, 100,000 pieces of animal bone and 800 bone, antler, glass and other artefacts.

For the first time, archaeologists have been able to see how early Anglo-Saxon London was laid out. The excavations suggest Lundenwic was laid out on a grid system, with well-maintained, gravelled 3-to-4m-wide north-south streets apparently connected by equally wide though less well-maintained east-west streets.



Rampant raiders: King Alfred's galleys engaging the Viking dragon ships in battle in 897

Photograph: Mary Evans

## Gulf troops given secret injections

### Exclusive

Christopher Bellamy  
Defence Correspondent

British troops in the Gulf War were given secret, still unidentified injections against biological warfare agents. Yet MPs were subsequently assured that all those administered had been disclosed.

The Independent has learnt that "five or six" injections were given which the Ministry of Defence has still not acknowledged. Campaigners fighting for Gulf War illness to be recognised fear that some of the injections could have been experimental.

The injections were not recorded on the troops' medical documents and the RAF medical expert appointed to investigate the "illness" - who has since been moved to other duties - was unaware of them.

Two weeks ago, Nicholas Soames, the Armed Forces Minister, told Parliament he was launching a £1.3m programme to find out the cause of the mysterious ailments which have affected 1,200 Gulf veterans. It is widely believed that the various illnesses may have been caused by exposure to organophosphate pesticides, by tablets taken as a precaution against chemical weapons, by the cocktail of injections against biological warfare agents given in a short period of time, or by a combination of those factors.

Mr Soames admitted that the MoD had misinformed him on the extent to which organophosphates had been used and has also launched an inquiry into how that happened. He dis-

closed that troops had been inoculated against four known biological warfare agents: anthrax, pertussis, bubonic plague and botulinum toxin.

But in a private session of the House of Commons Select Committee on Defence, a Labour MP asked the Surgeon-General, Vice-Admiral Tony Revell, how many vaccinations the MoD did not admit to. He replied that the number was about five or six. The vaccinations against plague, anthrax, pertussis and botulinum toxin had already been discussed. Lawyers for the Gulf veterans believe the "five or six" secret vaccinations were in addition to the four already discussed.

Dr David Clark, Labour's defence spokesman, last night demanded all remaining details of the vaccinations be revealed. He told The Independent: "I find this appalling. The Government must now come completely clean about what went on and ought to step up its efforts to find out what happened to these men and women. All drugs used in the Gulf ought to be declassified." Dr Clark has written to Mr Soames asking for an explanation, but last night the MoD insisted it had released full information about vaccinations given to Gulf troops.

Question marks over the MoD line arose after inquiries by Shaun Rusling, 37, a former medic with 32 Field Ambulance who was based at the main hospital intended to handle chemical and biological casualties in Wadi al-Batin, about 10 miles from the Iraqi border.

He is suffering a form of Gulf War illness and is no longer fit to work. He received a letter

dated 12 November from a Brigadier McDermott of the Army's medical directorate saying some of the injections he had been given were classified secret and were therefore not recorded. However, the use of plague, anthrax and pertussis vaccines was widely known - it was reported in the press at the time - and had been declassified before the brigadier wrote his letter. The secret vaccines were something else.

Mr Rusling's solicitors contacted Group Captain Bill Coker, the RAF doctor initially given the task of investigating Gulf War illness. He said he knew of no vaccines that had not been declared or which were classified secret. He knew about plague, anthrax and pertussis vaccines and said that if there were any others he wanted to know about them. He has now been transferred to other work, in the field of aviation medicine, but the House of Commons defence committee has put it on record that it wants to carry on using his expertise.

Mr Rusling said that because he was a medic he received more injections than were given to ordinary troops. Most received about a dozen injections; he says he had 24.

Kirsten Limb, a scientist working with solicitors representing some of the Gulf veterans, said a number of veterans reported having blood samples taken after they received injections described only as "biological warfare" and being told the samples were being sent to Porton Down, the Government's biological and chemical defence establishment, for analysis.

## Hebron awaits Christmas deal

Eric Silver  
Jerusalem

After a day of intensive diplomatic activity, Israeli and Palestinian negotiators were tying the final knots last night on a Christmas parcel that will remove Israeli troops from most of Hebron, the last West Bank Arab town still under occupation.

Israel radio reported all the outstanding issues had been resolved. A Palestinian minister, Jamil Barifi, said: "We expect an agreement tonight. I hope so." The terms were due to be sealed at a summit meeting later between the Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, and the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat.

The Israeli redeployment is nine months overdue. It was postponed after "Islamist" suicide bombings killed dozens of Israelis in February and March. The right-wing Likud government, which came to power in June, attempted to strengthen the security guarantees for the 450 Jewish settlers living in the



Coming to terms: Palestinian President Arafat (left) and the US mediator Dennis Ross



old town amid 150,000 Arabs. The agreement, brokered by the United States, will restore much of the goodwill which has been dissipated by Mr Netanyahu's patronising approach to the Palestinians, and by the bloody exchanges of fire between Israeli troops and Palestinian police in September.

It will open the way to further Israeli withdrawals under the interim Oslo accords, and to negotiations for a definitive settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

As a confidence-building measure, Israel yesterday increased the number of permits for Palestinian day labourers to

work in Israeli farms, factories and building sites from 42,000 to 50,000.

The final push towards the Hebron agreement was given by the US mediator, Dennis Ross, during a long night of talks with the Israeli and Palestinian teams on Sunday. Technical teams then met again yesterday.

The level was raised in the afternoon, when Mr Netanyahu and Mr Arafat's deputy, Mahmoud Abbas, joined the negotiators. The full teams met in the historic King David hotel in Jerusalem for two hours. Then Mr Netanyahu and Mr Abbas talked *ad-hoc* for half an hour. Both sides reported progress. Mr Abbas reported back to Mr Arafat in Gaza. Mr Netanyahu briefed his foreign and defence ministers, David Levy and Yitzhak Mordechai.

Although the details were still under wraps, the parties are believed to have agreed on a main draft and accompanying letters. There is expected to be a US letter of guarantee.

According to reports, Israel will withdraw in stages from a disputed road linking the Arab and Jewish parts of town. In return, the Palestinians will widen a buffer zone around the Jewish enclaves. New regulations are said to have been agreed on the arms that the two security forces will carry. Ideological revolution, page 6

## Fare deals that go off the rails

Christian Wolmar

If you want to know about rail fares, do not ask the national enquiry bureau. Or any of the privatised train companies.

According to a survey by the Liberal Democrats, the enquiry system for the railways has become the "second lottery" because the information is so inaccurate.

For example, those heading for Christmas in Glasgow from London and coming back after Hogmanay may be quoted £58 return. Or, if they are a bit unlucky, they will be told it is £72. Or £135. The same goes for a

day return from Southampton to Ipswich, on which answers from the national bureau ranged from £31 to £77.

According to the survey, the National Rail Enquiries Bureau and the train operators gave identical information on only one of ten routes. The survey, involving 150 requests, revealed that the same operators gave different prices for identical journeys and the national bureau frequently contradicted itself.

On Leeds to Rugby, Cross Country trains quoted £80.30 to £120.30 but the best offer was with the national bureau which

quoted £64. Unfortunately, the bureau does not sell tickets. And on West Coast InterCity, no price was available since its number remained unanswered despite 25 attempts.

No one was available to answer calls yesterday at the offices of the Association of Train Operators, which runs the national enquiry service set up this year to ensure that impartial information is given out.

The Liberal Democrats blame privatisation and the failure of the rail regulator to enforce the rules. David Chidgey, the party's transport spokesman,

said: "Britain's ticket enquiry system is Britain's second lottery. The information is so inconsistent that I am writing to ask the National Rail Enquiries Bureau to answer publicly the questions we have been trying to find an answer to."

David Charlesworth, who conducted the survey, sought help from the Consumers Association, but all they could add was that there was just one person in the country with the answers - a rail timetable consultant called Barry Doe who lives on the south coast. And his phone number remains a secret.

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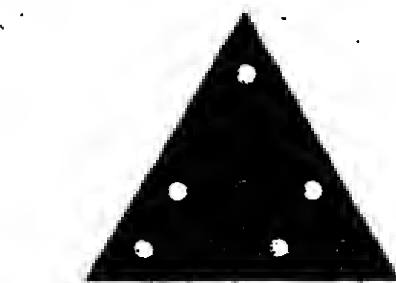
### QUICKLY

#### Plea for calm

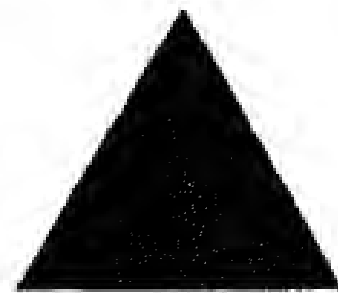
Politicians and clergy tried to keep the lid on the security situation in Ulster following the tit-for-tat violence. Page 2

#### Back on Boxing Day

There will be no independent tomorrow, but we will be back on Boxing Day with an issue in which our writers look back on moments that made the year.



Turkey, broken fairy lights,  
relatives, turkey, chitty chitty,  
bang bang, relatives.



Yo-ho-ho.



Best Selling Premium  
Cask Ale Since 1777



## significant shorts

## Prayers for missing girl



The family of the missing nine-year-old Kayleigh Ward were yesterday praying for her to be reunited with them at Christmas.

But police continued a massive hunt in the Blaenau area of Chester, detectives said that her "streetwise" nature could put her in even greater danger.

Over 70 officers, including dog-handlers and an underwater search team were involved in the hunt for the youngster, and among the targets of the search was a canal near her home.

Kayleigh disappeared after going to buy chips from a Chinese chip shop 900 yards from her home at about 6pm on Thursday.

## Briton drowns

A British man has drowned while swimming in the sea off the holiday island of Gran Canaria, the Foreign Office confirmed yesterday.

David James Baron, 34, drowned as a strong undercurrent swept through the water at El Taurito, Gran Canaria. Mr Baron is believed to have come from the north-west of England.

## Pensioner held in guns raid

A 70-year-old man was being questioned by police last night after a raid on a house in which pistols, sub-machine guns, ammunition and equipment for making ammunition were seized.

Officers swooped on the house in Waverley, Liverpool following a tip-off. The man was taken to Huyton police station for questioning.

## Redwood urges party unity

The former Cabinet minister John Redwood was attacked last night for urging unity in the Tory party.

A senior government source accused Mr Redwood of "cheek" for alleging that highly placed sources were to blame for party divisions. "This chap has done more to divide the party than the rest of us put together," the source said. "The most helpful thing he could do is shut up for Christmas."

Mr Redwood, who last year resigned from the Cabinet to stand against John Major for the Tory leadership, said: "Unity, unity, should be the Conservative cry this Christmas. We need a Christmas truce, which extends through the New Year and to the election."

He said the party needed to remember that there were more things that united its members than divided them. *Anthony Bevis*

## Charge over Christie killing

A 32-year-old man was remanded in custody yesterday charged with the murder of Russell Christie, the younger brother of the former Olympic 100m sprint champion Linford Christie.

Simon Williams, unemployed, of no fixed abode, was ordered to reappear before Marylebone magistrates on 30 December 1996. No application for bail was made.

Russell Christie, 34, died in hospital on Friday from stab wounds to his neck after police had found him in Notting Hill, west London.

## Hogmanay goes flat

A major event in Edinburgh's Hogmanay celebrations has been cancelled because of safety concerns.

The World Party, featuring DJs from all over the world, was to take place at Meadowbank Sports Centre. But the promoters raised concerns after a fire alarm went off four times at another event at the venue at the weekend.

## Prison is just a holiday camp

Jason Bennetto  
Crime Correspondent

A former Pontin's holiday camp is to be converted into a makeshift jail to help cope with the overcrowding crisis, under proposals announced yesterday. It also looks likely that a floating prison will be brought over from New York and moored in Portland Harbour, Dorset, within the next two months.

The proposals have been forced on officials by the disclosure yesterday that plans to convert a former RAF base near

Doncaster into an emergency overspill jail will be postponed or scrapped because of local opposition.

The Prison Service announced yesterday that it has lodged a planning application to use a former holiday camp at Heysham in Lancashire to house up to 700 low-risk inmates. Until two years ago, the 62-acre site resounded to the cries of Hi-De-Ho!

The camp consists of a large number of two-person chalets and would need a security fence erected around it before it

could open as a jail. The Prison Service hopes to have part of the camp operational by May, but this will depend on obtaining support from the local council.

And Richard Tilt, the Director General of the Prison Service, told *The Independent* yesterday that there had been a "positive" reaction from the local authority about the plan to ship over a former floating jail from the United States to Dorset.

Mr Tilt said he was hopeful that the *Resolution*, currently on the Hudson River near New

York, could be in use to hold up to 400 low-risk prisoners in Britain by mid February. The vessel, which Mr Tilt described as a "block of flats on a pontoon" is a purpose-built jail and includes workshops and exercise facilities.

The emergency jails are needed, he said, to cope with the rising prison population which is expected to reach 58,000 by the end of January, as Michael Howard's emphasis on tougher sentencing bites. Unless extra space is found by February, inmates will have to be housed in

expensive police cells. The Prison Service's over-crowding problems were compounded yesterday by the news that Doncaster Council was objecting to the proposals to convert a former RAF base at Finningley into a jail. Prison officials will now appeal to the Department of the Environment and a lengthy public inquiry seems likely.

Harry Fletcher, assistant general secretary of the National Association of Probation Officers (Napo), said: "The idea of buying a holiday camp is an act

of utter desperation. As we everywhere else there's bound to be strong local objections."

Ministers will have to face the possibility of reducing the prison population or deal with the daunting consequences."

Napo also disclosed yesterday that the Home Secretary's plan for five child jails - announced in 1993 - for up to 200 twelve to 15-year-old persistent offenders were in disarray. N work has yet begun on the secure training centres and plan for all five have run into planning difficulties.

## Appeal for calm in tense N Ireland

David McKitterick  
Ireland Correspondent

Politicians, clergymen and others in Northern Ireland yesterday sought to soothe the lid on the security situation in the wake of the recent IRA and loyalist violence in Belfast.

But there was little sign of any lessening of apprehension that more violence would follow from either or both sources, and few indications that the violent organisations were deciding to pull back from the brink.

There was some hope, however, that the seasonal three-day ceasefire, which was traditional before the 1994 cessations of violence, might provide a cooling-off period.

Eddie Copeland, the republican injured in a loyalist booby-trap explosion in Ardoyne on Sunday, was yesterday recovering in hospital. Politicians and clergy, meanwhile, appealed for calm and an end to the im-

mediate cycle of violence, which began on Friday night when an IRA gunman shot and wounded a police officer in a Belfast children's hospital.

The Copeland attack, which is regarded as retaliation for the hospital shooting, is thought to have been the work of the illegal Ulster Defence Association. The organisation has not, however, formally admitted responsibility for the bombing.

Gary Michael of the UDA's political arm, the Ulster Democratic Party, refused to condemn the attack, saying: "I am not going to get into this sort of long drawn out and long standing choreography about condemnation. We must recognise is that every violent event in Northern Ireland is truly tragic and we must do everything in our power to ensure there is no more violence."

Loyalist sources argue privately that groups such as Mr McKitterick's party would lose

much of their value if they distanced themselves too far from their paramilitary associates.

His attitude echoed the position taken by the Sinn Féin president, Gerry Adams, who, while regretting the hospital shooting, refrained from condemning it.

Mr Adams said: "I want to see all of the armed groups showing restraint, and I want to see people enjoying a peaceful Christmas. I also want to appeal to people right across the political spectrum to fill the vacuum which has been created."

The Catholic Primate of All Ireland, Archbishop of Armagh Sean Brady, said he was still hopeful that recent events had been "only a temporary setback". Archbishop Robin Eames, the Anglican Primate of All Ireland, said loyalist groups should realise that their political representatives had been making a great impression and their cause would be weakened by a return to violence.

## Deal with Goldsmith splits Ulster Unionists

Anthony Bevis  
Political Editor

An Ulster Unionist split widened yesterday when the party's lone European MP switched from the pro-EU European People's Party to Sir James Goldsmith's Europe of Nations group in the European Parliament.

After David Trimble, the party leader, formally announced the controversial decision yesterday, the deputy leader John Taylor distanced himself from the move.

"It was mentioned vaguely to me about 10 days ago that there were talks ongoing, but I wasn't aware that any decision had been reached," he told BBC Radio's *World at One*. "I have since discovered that the European policy committee of our party didn't know about it either."

Mr Taylor also warned that his party's representative on the EU Committee of the Regions, in Brussels, might now have to leave the European People's Party, the group to which the Conservative Party belongs.

"It means that the UUP in Europe, which was a member of the mainstream centre-right grouping is now going to be with a very small group of only 17 members in the European Parliament, and should that group disappear, we're going to be left totally isolated."

Doubts were also raised about two other elements of the package - the influence to be wielded by Sir James and his UK Referendum Party, and the money that was reported to be in it for the Ulster Unionists.

Following speculation that Sir James would pay the Ulster Unionists up to £250,000 for the

deal, the financial edge appeared much less clear-cut.

Sir James said: "We wanted to inform and create a debate, and obtain a referendum, obviously for all the people of the UK. Therefore, we had allocated a certain amount of promotional funds for Northern Ireland." Asked if those funds would go directly to the UUP, he said: "No. They will go from us directly to the cause of obtaining a referendum."

Mr Trimble said in Belfast that the arrangement was European, and would give Sir James no influence at Westminster. "There is no linkage between us and the Referendum Party," he said.

Given the importance of the nine-strong Unionist vote in the Commons, government whips will be pleased with the reassurance that it would be business as usual.



Tracey Andrews, accused of killing her boyfriend, after her release from prison

## Woman in road rage case freed on bail for Christmas

Tracey Andrews, the former model accused of stabbing to death her boyfriend Lee Harvey who she says was a road-rage victim, was yesterday freed on bail to spend Christmas with her family.

Ms Andrews, 27, will spend Christmas with her family after the prosecution failed to overcome last Friday's decision by magistrates to grant her bail.

Her step-father Alan Carter said later that the family were "relieved" she would be with them over Christmas.

Ms Andrews had been held at Eastwood Park women's prison near Gloucester after the

prosecution challenged the magistrate's decision.

She is charged with murdering Mr Harvey on 1 December. He died from almost 40 stab wounds in an isolated country lane near the couple's home in Alvechurch, Worcestershire.

Ms Andrews, who was charged with the killing last week, denies any involvement, and has said her boyfriend was killed by a man who was a passenger in a Ford Sierra car during a road rage type incident.

A condition of the bail is that she will return to her parents' home in Alvechurch, near the spot where Mr Harvey died.

Ms Andrews' solicitor, Tim Robinson, said she would be spending Christmas at home with her family and daughter.

He said a significant new witness in the case had come forward, following stories in the press. "She is grateful to members of the press for the response to the appeal which has been made. Already one very significant witness has come forward," he said. Ms Andrews is due to appear again before magistrates on February 14.

Mr Carter, married to Tracey's mother Irene, said: "We are just so relieved that she is coming home."

**CONCISE CROSSWORD**  
No. 3178 Tuesday 24 December

**ACROSS**

- 1 S American country (4)
- 4 Thick (5)
- 9 Municipal (5)
- 10 Suffer (7)
- 11 Indecorous (8)
- 12 Closed (4)
- 13 Item of office equipment (6,7)
- 17 Object of ridicule (4)
- 18 Billboard (8)
- 21 Nobleman (7)
- 22 Israeli resort (5)
- 23 Stratrum (5)
- 24 Before long (4)

**DOWN**

- 2 Overhanging parts of roof (5)
- 3 Polluted (7)
- 4 Cheat (6,7)
- 5 Unclothed figure (4)
- 6 Made of clay (7)
- 7 Back of neck (6)
- 8 Fortified wine (4)
- 9 Precise (7)
- 15 Men's hairdressers (7)
- 16 Garments for legs (6)
- 17 Explosive device (4)
- 19 Snow house (5)
- 20 Feeble (4)

**Solution to yesterday's Concise Crossword:**

ACROSS: 1 Phinney, 5 Terry (Planetary), 8 Plume, 9 Pfennig, 10 Refrains, 11 Cony, 12 Sublet, 14 Despot, 17 Focal, 19 Arizona, 22 Rebirth, 23 Amass, 24 Nacre, 25 Methane, DOWN: 1 Paper, 2 Assunder, 3 Niece, 4 Repast, 5 Treacle, 6 Rangy, 7 Yoghurt, 12 Saffron, 13 Enlarge, 15 Pro rata, 16 Fatum, 18 Cubic, 20 Inapt, 21 Aisle.

**Notes**

**Weather forecast**

**forecast for today**

Mostly fine and cold over the majority of the UK with patchy cloud and spells of weak dry weather. However, eastern coastal counties of Scotland and England will have more in the way of cloud and perhaps a few light rain, sleet or snow showers, but amounts of snow should be limited. Southern Britain will enjoy a brief north-east wind which will make it feel bitterly cold, but the north will have much lighter weather.

**outlook for the next few days**

Christmas Day will be cold and sunny in most places with a widespread frost late on and early, but there is still the chance of a few light snow showers in eastern England, and there may be freezing fog in the Scottish interior. Thursday and Friday will also be cold with severe night frosts and dense freezing fog in N Ireland and western Scotland may be cloudier and milder by Sunday but the heavy weather will persist elsewhere.

**British Isles weather**

yesterday (23/12) cloudy, 11-16; today (24/12) 11-16; tomorrow (25/12) 11-16; 26/12 11-16; 27/12 11-16; 28/12 11-16; 29/12 11-16; 30/12 11-16; 31/12 11-16.

**world weather**

previous day's figures at local time

Location	Temp	Wind	Cloud	Pressure
London	11-16	11-16	11-16	11-16
Birmingham	11-16	11-16	11-16	11-16
Manchester	11-16	11-16	11-16	11-16
Newcastle	11-16	11-16	11-16	11-16
Edinburgh	11-16	11-16	11-16	11-16
Glasgow	11-16	11-16	11-16	11-16
Belfast	11-16	11-16	11-16	11-16
Cardiff	11-16	11-16	11-16	11-16
Bristol	11-16	11-16	11-16	11-16
Exeter	11-16	11-16	11-16	11-16
Plymouth	11-16	11-16	11-16	11-16
Southampton	11-16	11-16	11-16	11-16
Portsmouth	11-16	11-16	11-16	11-16
London	11-16	11-16	11-16	11-16
Birmingham	11-16	11-16	11-16	11-16
Manchester	11-16	11-16	11-16	11-16
Newcastle	11-16	11-16	11-16	11-16
Edinburgh	11-16	11-16	11-16	11-16
Glasgow	11-16	11-16	11-16	11-16
Belfast	11-16	11-16	11-16	11-16
Cardiff	11-16	11-16	11-16	11-16
Bristol	11-16	11-16	11-16	11-16
Exeter	11-16	11-16	11-16	11-16
Plymouth	11-16	11-16	11-16	11-16
Southampton	11-16	11-16	11-16	11-16
Portsmouth	11-16	11-16	11-16	11-16

**Lighting-up times**

Location	15.55	16.05	16.15	16.25	16.35	16.45	16.55	17.05	17.15	17.25	17.35	17.45	17.55	18.05	18.15	18.25	18.35	18.45	18.55	19.05	19.15	19.25	19.35	19.45	19.55	20.05	20.15	20.25	20.35	20.45	20.55	21.05	21.15	21.25	21.35	21.45	21.55	22.05	22.15	22.25	22.35	22.45	22.55	23.05	23.15	23.25	23.35	23.45	23.55	24.05	24.15	24.25	24.35	24.45	24.55	25.05	25.15	25.25	25.35	25.45	25.55	26.05	26.15	26.25	26.35	26.45	26.55	27.05	27.15	27.25	27.35	27.45	27.55	28.05	28.15	28.25	28.35	28.45	28.55	29.05	29.15	29.25	29.35	29.45	29.55	30.05	30.15	30.25	30.35	30.45	30.55	31.05	31.15	31.25	31.35	31.45	31.55	32.05	32.15	32.25	32.35	32.45	32.55	33.05	33.15	33.25	33.35	33.45	33.55	34.05	34.15	34.25	34.35	34.45	34.55	35.05	35.15	35.25	35.35	35.45	35.55	36.05	36.15	36.25	36.35	36.45	36.55	37.05	37.15	37.25	37.35	37.45	37.55	38.05	38.15	38.25	38.35	38.45	38.55	39.05	39.15	39.25	39.35	39.45	39.55	40.05	40.15	40.25	40.35	40.45	40.55	41.05	41.15	41.25	41.35	41.45	41.55	42.05	42.15	42.25	42.35	42.45	42.55	43.05	43.15	43.25	43.35	43.45	43.55	44.05	44.15	44.25	44.35	44.45	44.55	45.05	45.15	45.25	45.35	45.45	45.55	46.05	46.15	46.25	46.35	46.45	46.55	47.05	47.15	47.25	47.35	47.45	47.55	48.05	48.15	48.25	48.35	48.45	48.55	49.05	49.15	49.25	49.35	49.45	49.55	50.05	50.15	50.25	50.35	50.45	50.55	51.05	51.15	51.25	51.35	51.45	51.55	52.05	52.15	52.25	52.35	52.45	52.55	53.05	53.15	53.25	53.35	53.45	53.55	54.05	54.15	54.25	54.35	54.45	54.55	55.05	55.15	55.25	55.35	55.45	55.55	56.05	56.15	56.25	56.35	56.45	56.55	57.05	57.15	57.25	57.35	57.45	57.55	58.05	58.15	58.25	58.35	58.45	58.55	59.05	59.15	59.25	59.35	59.45	59.55	60.05	60.15	60.25	60.35	60.45	60.55	61.05	61.15	61.25	61.35	61.45	61.55	62.05	62.15	62.25	62.35	62.45	62.55	63.05	63.15	63.25	63.35	63.45	63.55	64.05	64.15	64.25	64.35	64.45	64.55	65.05	65.15	65.25	65.35	65.45	65.55	66.05	66.15	66.25	66.35	66.45	66.55	67.05	67.15	67.25	67.35	67.45	67.55	68.05	68.15	68.25	68.35	68.45	68.55	69.05	69.15	69.25	69.35	69.45	69.55	70.05	70.15	70.25	70.35	70.45	70.55	71.05	71.15	71.25	71.35	71.45	71.55	72.05	72.15	72.25	72.35	72.45	72.55	73.05	73.15	73.25	73.35	73.45	73.55	74.05	74.15	74.25	74.35	74.45	74.55	75.05	75.15	75.25	75.35	75.45	75.55	76.05	76.15	76.25	76.35	76.45
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# Disney's spotted dogs breed a rash of puppy love

Charlie Bain

Demand for spotty dog puppies has soared since the pre-Christmas release of the video of the original Disney animated cartoon of 101 Dalmatians and the new film version.

Figures released by the Kennel Club, the registry organisation for pedigree dogs, show that there has been a 200 per cent increase in enquiries about the breed since the video was released last September.

With the film version now on general release in Britain, the news sparked fears among animal groups yesterday that the public would be seduced into buying a Dalmatian puppy after seeing the film, only to find out months later that they cannot handle the highly strung breed.

The Kennel Club said that in the three months previous to October they had received around 90 telephone calls asking for details of non-commercial Dalmatian breeders. However, in the three months since, they have been bombarded with 270 calls on the same subject.

"The increase has been astounding, but it was something which we were expecting," Brian Leonard, a spokesman for the organisation, said. "It's the same story for any breed which is highlighted in a film or television advertisement."

"After the Andrew Adonis [for lavatory paper] was released we were inundated with calls about yellow labradors and soon after the Dalmatian advert we were inundated with calls about English sheepdogs."

"I just hope that if these en-

quiries turn into purchases, people know what they are letting themselves in for. A Dalmatian is a lively, demanding animal, not a couch potato dog."

One non-commercial breeder, based in Gillingham, Kent, who did not want to be named, said that her Dalmatian bitch gave birth to a litter of 11 puppies last October. Since then, she has sold them all and has had to turn away around 20 enquirers.

Worried about the threat of reckless owners over Christmas, however, she has refused to let the new owners pick up their purchases until after the festive period.

"Usually I'd keep the puppies for eight weeks but in this case I'm going to keep them for nine," she said yesterday. "I've also had to operate a stringent vetting process as I've had a number of idiots ringing up who quite obviously are not serious owners but have just seen the film and think it would be novel to have one."

The National Canine Defence League, which is running a Christmas campaign warning people to be aware of going "Dalmatian Crazy", was tracing itself for an influx of unwanted puppies after the Christmas period.

"What is particularly disturbing about these figures is the amount of people making formal enquiries when the majority of would-be owners will probably purchase them from commercial puppy farms," a spokesman said.

"A lot of animal groups could have some real problems on their hands in the New Year."



Spotty dog fever: 101 Dalmatians has fuelled demand, but what will happen to puppies such as this two-day-old when the novelty wears off?

## Spending set to break records

Steve Boggan

Shops and stores yesterday hailed the Christmas rush as the best for nine years. Sales in some parts of the country were more than 16 per cent up on last year as fine weather brought out last-minute shoppers in their millions.

In the North, the MetroCentre in Gateshead reported business as "very busy"; at the Meadowhall Shopping Centre near Sheffield, management said there were 16.6 per cent more shoppers than last year; at the Lakeside Shopping Centre in Thurrock, Essex, customers were spending an average of £130 - a 10 per cent increase on last year;

and in London retailers expected to break all records. "We've had the best Christmas since 1987," said Martin Barnett, of the Marble Arch Retailers' Association in London's West End.

Buzz Lightyear, the computer-generated hero of the Disney film Toy Story, continued to be the most popular - and problematical - buy. With shops cleaned out of the plastic astronaut, last-minute deliveries were expected to cause chaos inside stores.

"People are continuously coming in and asking for them," said a spokeswoman for the Disney Store in London's Regent Street. "If the toys come in they will go straight on the shelves for sale. It has been frantic, shoppers have even

asked if they can camp outside."

Although good for shoppers, the dry, icy weather caused a crop of minor shunts on Britain's roads, particularly in Scotland. Motoring organisations urged drivers to be cautious today in preparation for the anticipated exodus from cities to the countryside.

The AA and the RAC said problems were caused yesterday not by the volume of traffic but by the weather conditions. "It's extremely quiet for a Monday morning and it looks like loads of people are taking Christmas week off," an RAC spokeswoman said.

Around 2 million people are expected to fly out of the country during the two-week holiday period, but meteo-

rologists said many could be in for a disappointing time. According to the London Weather Centre, the Canary Islands, Spain, North Africa and Portugal are enduring some of the worst and wettest weather in years.

During the past week, parts of Spain have been flooded. Malaga had 218mm of rain, compared with its seasonal average of 62mm. Gibraltar has had a drenching with 277mm, compared with the average of 150mm. And in Morocco, Casablanca had 158mm, compared with the usual 94mm.

There were hopes last night that the weather was improving on the Continent, with drier spells and higher temperatures predicted.

## Girl, 6, killed by tree lights

Louise Jury

A six-year-old girl was electrocuted in front of her family when she switched on the Christmas tree lights.

Police and Yorkshire Electricity staff are investigating the accident which killed Cara Weatherstone in Hornsea, East Yorkshire.

Her parents, Beverley, 38, and Anthony, 40, and six brothers and sisters, aged between 15 months and 18, were all with her in the living room when it happened, on Saturday.

It is understood Cara stood with her bare foot on a copper gas pipe running round the room to switch on the lights, which were plugged into a table lamp.

The family had put up the first tree last week and Cara had switched on the lights on previous occasions. The investigation will centre on whether there was a fault with the arrangement.

"It all so happened so quickly," George Weatherstone, her 67-year-old grandfather, said yesterday.

"The current grabbed Cara. Her sister Fiona tried to push her off and got a tingle herself and then Cara fell off. The whole family saw it, but could do nothing."

Police and ambulance were called but Cara, a pupil at Hornsea Infants School, was pronounced dead on arrival at Hull Royal Infirmary.

Mr Weatherstone said that Cara's father, his son - who works for East Riding Social Services - and her mother were devastated.

"Anthony and Beverley are in a terrible state. It's such a tragedy," he said.

"Poor little Cara. She had turned the lights on so many times before, it was just unfortunate that she had her bare foot on the gas pipe. She was earthed and could not be thrown off by the electric shock."

A Humberside police spokeswoman said: "Extensive inquiries revealed that the incident appeared to have been a tragic accident."

## It's Wednesday the 25th: just another working day

There are far more people than you think working over the Christmas holiday, writes Clare Garner

More than 10 million of the nation's workers may have downed tools for a 14-day Christmas and New Year holiday, but many others will not even get Christmas Day off.

And it won't just be police officers, publicans, water inspectors, charity workers, vicars, firemen, taxi drivers, doctors and hospital staff.

"There are more people working than you would imagine," said a spokeswoman for the Confederation of British Industry. "People think of train and bus drivers, but I don't think any of them are operating. It is the hotels, catering, pubs, utilities, emergency services, lorry drivers and farmers. Since the sales start on Boxing Day we reckon there will probably be people getting the shops ready on Christmas Day."

Both the Labour and Conservative Party have press officers on duty, although a spokeswoman for the Labour Party went to great pains to insist: "The Labour Party believes people should have the right to enjoy Christmas."

Jo Moore, 33, the Labour Party press officer who has drawn the short straw, said: "Stories do sometimes break on Christmas Day. Certainly by the evening when the first editions drop there are calls. That's the level of activity. There's isn't anybody actually sitting in Millbank Tower on Christmas Day. They would be a particularly sad individual."

"I will have time to cook my Christmas turkey and open my presents with my kids. I don't think I could explain to my kids 18 months and three years old if I wasn't at home, but they don't mind the odd phone call."

Some employees are rewarded for their seasonal services. RAC patrolmen have no problem with volunteers - they



Far from home: Gunners of the Royal Artillery kept the festive spirit alive last year while peace-keeping in Bosnia by singing carols on Mt Igman, near Sarajevo

earn five times their normal wage if they work on Christmas Day. The "Knights of the Road" top the festive bonus league, picking up £250 a shift. Rivals AA quadruple wages.

To many taxi drivers, Christmas Day is the perfect time to right off debts. Paul Gould, 52, who works for Computer Cab, a London-based radio taxi company, pays for all his Christmas presents by working three or four hours on the 25th December.

"The account work is very lucrative," he said. "Computer Cab almost invites you to go out, the incentives are that good." Besides the fact that the meter clock up £40-£50 an hour, Mr Gould is glad of the excuse to get out of the house. "Christmas morning is crazy," he said. "I like to get out of the way. My wife's got a lot to do."

Pat Bailey, who also works for Computer Cab, takes a different view. No amount of pound signs could tempt him away from his turkey. "Not under any circumstances whatsoever," he said. "It's a day to be with my family and friends. The way I look at it is that I work very, very

hard the rest of the year. If I can't do that little bit extra during the year there must be something wrong with me."

But extra pay is out of the question in some cases. At the telephone bank, First Direct, employees are expected to hunker down willy nilly. The service is, after all, round the clock, 365 days a year.

And First Direct appears to get the custom. It expects an incredible 1,200 people to interrupt their turkey and trimmings to make a call on Christmas Day.

Last year, the company received 120 calls from customers who just rang to say "Happy Christmas" on Christmas Day. Most were from people trying to make last minute financial arrangements, such as asking for an overdraft or a Visa extension, or trying to transfer funds. The staff is dedicated from the top downwards: even the chief executive "pops in to say 'hi'".

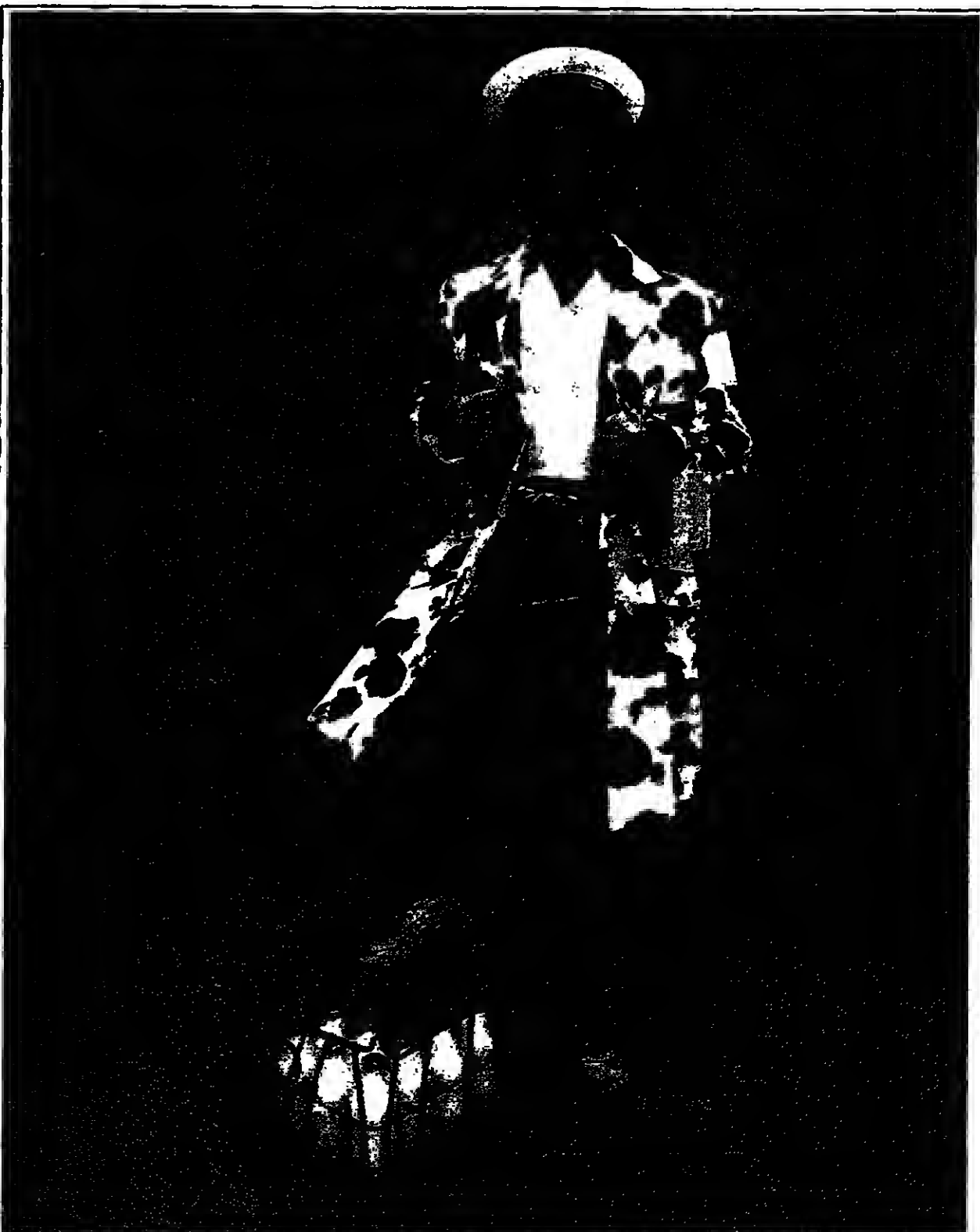
According to a survey by the Institute of Management, those who work for small companies are more likely to benefit from an extended break during the

holiday period. Seventy per cent of managers in small firms, comprising one to 100 employees, said their organisation takes time off, compared with 45 per cent of managers in large firms.

Roger Young, the institute's director general, said: "Christmas, in particular, is an ideal time opportunity for hard working teams to let their hair down and get their knees up at the end of the year. Staff will then approach the New Year invigorated and re-motivated."

Journalists and television staff also have to work. In 1979 Martyn Lewis remembers being called up by ITN in the middle of Christmas hunch and told to hop on a plane to India because the Soviet Union had just invaded Afghanistan.

This year Mr Lewis will spend Christmas Day rattling around the BBC television studios from dawn to dusk. Why him? "It was basically my turn," he said. "I've been at the BBC 10 years and I'd always found a very good reason not to do Christmas Day. I ran out of excuses, basically."



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## news

# Teachers mark down grammar questions

Judith Judd  
Education Editor

English teachers and government advisers are at odds over new sample grammar tests for 14-year-olds to be piloted in schools next term.

Teachers say the sample tests, which have been seen by *The Independent*, will harm pupils' grasp of grammar and unleash a debate among experts about what constitutes correct grammar.

The controversial tests have been commissioned by the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority, which advises the Government on exams.

Gillian Sheppard, Secretary of State for Education and Employment, ordered the introduction of new tests earlier this year. She said that she wanted to address the concerns of universities and employers about the state of school leavers' grammar, spelling and punctuation.

English teachers argue that grammar should be taught and assessed through writing rather than through short, timed grammar tests with brief answers. They say sample tests suggest that the new tests will be even worse than they feared.

Next term tests in grammar, spelling and punctuation will be piloted in 2 per cent of schools and all schools will be able to volunteer to take them next May.

From 1998 they will be compulsory for all 14-year-olds alongside existing national tests in English, maths and science.

The sample test asks pupils to identify spelling rules by giving a plural of words such as cactus. Another of the questions asks the pupils to list the four main verbs in a sentence.

Teachers argue that it is misleading to suggest that there is a spelling pattern which means that the plural of words such as cactus is invariably formed by replacing

"us" with "i". Even if one would mark cactuses as wrong, they ask, should the one say syllabuses or syllabi, focuses or foci?

They also say that a question that asks candidates to underline four main verbs in the sentence "the monument is very special for me because it is where I spent most of my days as a little child playing with my friend and where I used to go with my parents for strolls" is problematic.

Many people, they say, would argue that a sentence can have only one main verb.

Gabrielle Cliff Hodges, acting chair of the National Association for the Teaching of English, said: "There are differences of opinion about grammar. Is there a model of grammar on which these tests will be based?"

Teachers needed a much clearer idea, she said, of what was being proposed and of the terminology being used.

Teachers are also concerned that a number of questions give pupils a passage of incorrect English to write correctly.

For instance, they are asked to correct passages such as "they argue that animals what are kept in unnatural conditions are all miserable. They give an example of one of the worse things being tigers trapped in small bare cages with no space to turn round in."

Anne Barnes, general secretary of the National Association for the Teaching of English, said: "Anyone who has taught English knows that you try to avoid putting three ways of spelling their on the blackboard. If you do, they never sort out the correct one."

"Here you are presenting children with something in print that is wrong but the authority of print makes it seem right."

The School Curriculum and Assessment Authority had no comment to make.

## A man who just wants his mother for Christmas



John Cohen, 64, who is homeless, at the Christmas lunch held by the charity Crisis at Bermondsey, south London, yesterday. The photograph is of Mr Cohen and his mother taken in 1948. He has not seen her since 1950. With 2,000 volunteers across Britain, Crisis will provide a Christmas for 4,000 people. Photograph: John Voos

## Dickensian season for the elderly

A government report on energy saving reveals a shocking picture of housing deprivation, with the elderly and those living in rented accommodation suffering winter cold on a Dickensian scale.

The English House Condition Survey 1991 (Energy Report) shows that the average home is half as energy efficient as today's building standards require, while 15 per cent of the entire stock - 3 million homes - are grossly inefficient. Four out of 10 homes have no loft insulation, or insulation less than 3.5ins thick. Only a quarter of all cavity walls are insulated. And only three in 10 homes are draught-proof.

Last year, however, the Government cut funds from £100m to £73m for its Home Energy Efficiency Scheme (HEES), which pays people on low-incomes and older people up to £305 to insulate their lofts, seal off draughts and lag hot water cylinders. The average grant is £160.

By contrast, the report says £2,000 to £5,000 needs to be spent on improving the energy performance of each inefficient house. It puts a price of £26.3bn on measures to cut England's consumption of domestic fuel by 30 per cent, the target set in the 1995 Home Energy Conservation Act. To date, £350m has been spent under HEES.

The Energy Report measures the fuel efficiency of homes on a scale of 1 to 100. Current building regulations demand a rating of 70. And draft planning guidance from the DoE says the poorest 20 per cent of households need ratings of 60 or more before they can afford adequate heating. But the average energy rating of England's homes is just 35, while 7 per cent score 10 or less.

Elderly and disabled people and those with respiratory problems "are concentrated in the least efficient stock", the report adds. Well over half England's pensioners are failing to maintain a "minimum" heating regime of 18C (64F) in their living rooms.

This rises to 83 per cent of single pensioners in privately rented accommodation. The 250,000 homes they inhabit have an average energy rating of only 11, and it would cost them a quarter of their entire income to heat their homes adequately.

Yet the elderly are at especially high risk, the report warns, "not only because of their increased frailty but also because their age makes them physiologically less sensitive to cold".

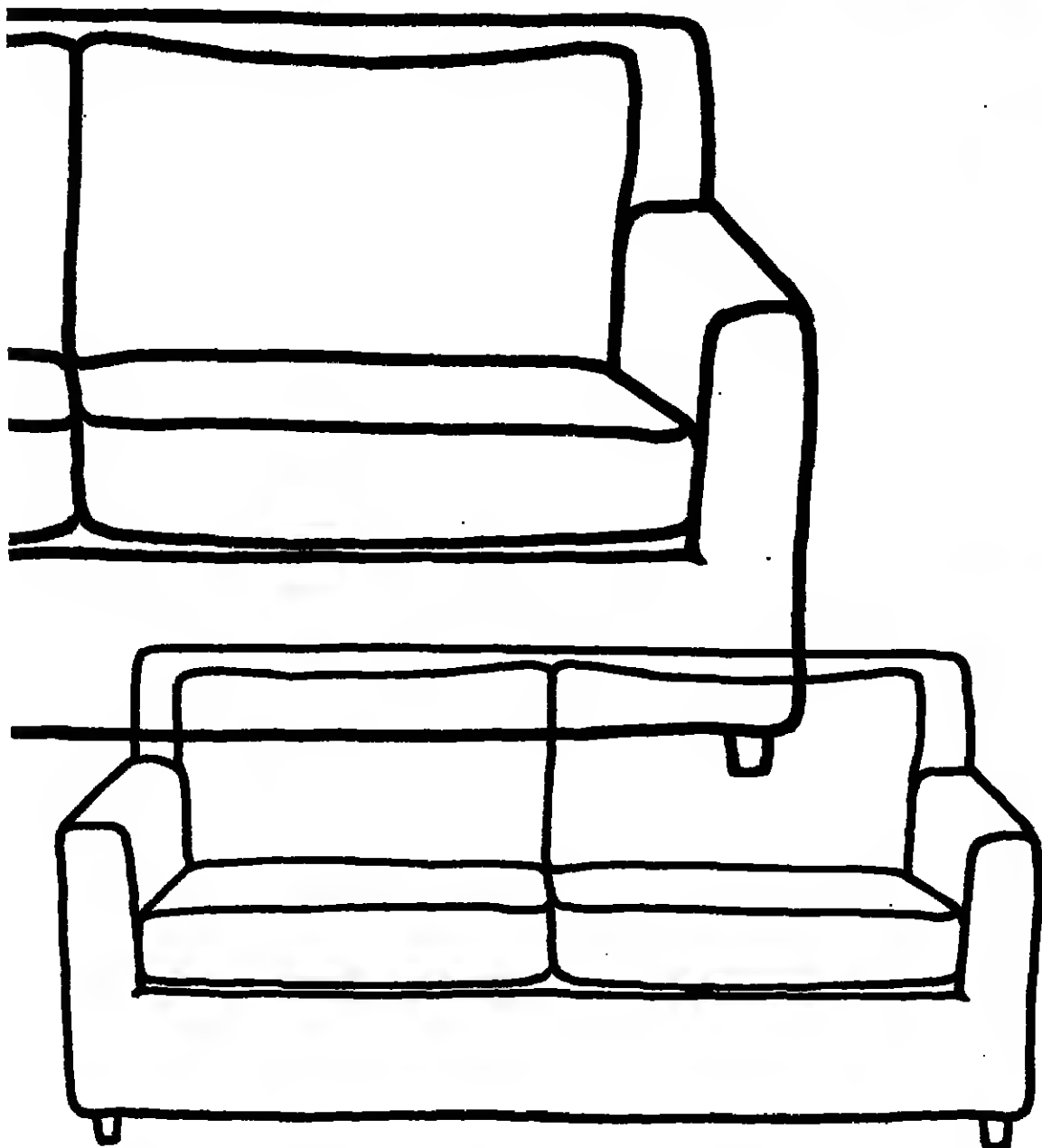
According to Mervyn Kohler of Help the Aged, these factors account for an observed 15 per cent "swing" in the mortality rate among the over 60s in winter.

The report says the private rented sector "stands out as being exceptionally inefficient", with an average rating of 22. Over a quarter of the sector has an energy rating of 10 or less, and 17 per cent rate 1 or less.

"We are talking about badly maintained older houses with thin solid walls, draughty doors and windows, no insulation and a tiny electric fire for heating", says Dr Brenda Boardman of Oxford's Environmental Change Unit.

"It is impossible for anyone on a low income to keep warm in this kind of housing. It simply does not provide adequate shelter from the elements."

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## HELP US BUILD AN ANIMAL SANCTUARY



# They were sweet, innocent, angelic - then they became MPs

Judith Judd  
Education Editor

Choirboys are not what they seem. Yesterday, as choristers from Southwell to Salisbury prepared for the Christmas services, a magazine revealed the facts behind the innocent faces. Some of those bearded, angelic creatures, it appears, are heading for an unlikely future - as members of parliament.

Several well-known MPs, according to the Choir Schools Association magazine, served their time in the nation's cathedral choir stalls.

Michael Mates, Conservative MP for East Hampshire, and Robert Key, Conservative MP for Salisbury, in Wiltshire, both once sang sweetly as pupils of Salisbury Cathedral School.

John Wilkinson, Conservative MP for Ruislip and Northwood, was a pupil at St George's, Windsor.

The magazine has failed to unearth any Labour MPs with a choral past but Simon Hughes, Liberal Democrat MP for Bournemouth, used to sing at Landaff in Wales.

And hard-nosed MPs speak with misty eyes of the days



when their lives were ruled by matins and evensong rather than whips and select committees.

Mr Mates, who attended Salisbury Cathedral School from 1943-1947, told the magazine of "treasures beyond the dreams of any normal prep-school boy" dished out by residents of the Cathedral Close in the period before Christmas, when the choristers stayed on to sing services after the other boys had gone home.

Mr Mates says: "What has remained with me is the beauty of the music, the solemnity of the Book of Common Prayer and the majesty of the King



Heavenly times: Choristers recall their experience with affection. Simon Hughes, left, and Michael Mates, right, are among MPs who have been in choirs. Mr Mates says: "It is an idyll which will stay with me to the grave" Photograph: Geraint Lewis

James's Bible. Add to this one of the most beautiful cathedral closes in Britain with the soaring grandeur of the cathedral itself, and it is easy to understand that it is an idyll which

will stay with me to my grave." Philip Titcombe, the magazine's editor, suggests that it is the qualities of "discipline, intelligence and communication" that help choristers to

distinction in public life. It will be interesting to note, he adds, how girl choristers, now being admitted to some schools, flourish in "the establishment". Other former choristers who

have made their mark include Oz Clarke, the wine expert, Clive Mantle, who plays Mike in television's *Casualty*, Jon Soow, the broadcaster, and Rodney Galpin, chairman of



Standard Chartered Bank and a Bank of England director. There are 39 schools which educate choristers and which are attached to cathedrals, churches and college chapels. All but two are independent but most choristers' fees are subsidised. On average parents pay less than half fees.

St Mary's, Edinburgh, has had a mixed choir for many years but the first English cathedral choir for girls was set up five years ago at Salisbury, Exeter, Wells and York have followed. The introduction of girls was resisted by traditionalists who maintained that boys produced a unique choral tone

that girls could not replicate. But a report in the magazine of research into the differences between boys' and girls' voices challenges their view.

Professor Graham Welch of Rochampton Institute says that his research shows that even expert listeners cannot tell the difference between all-boys, all-girls and mixed choirs. What counts, he says, is the sex of the trainer. He asked two panels of listeners, one of choral music experts, and one of musicians without special knowledge of choirs, to identify the sex of 15 choirs.

He concluded that sounds that are perceived as "masculine" are made by choirs trained by men and "feminine" sounds are made by choirs trained by women.

Earlier studies have shown that the sex of untrained singers can usually be identified but the Rochampton study shows that the same is not true of trained singers. Professor Welch says: "We find no evidence in their results that the introduction of girls into cathedral choirs will necessarily have any effect on the choral tone that is produced, nor that the much valued Anglican choral tradition will be changed."

## Two held in Saudi over nurse killing

Charlie Bain

Britain was negotiating with the Saudi Arabian authorities last night for access to two British nurses being held over the killing of an Australian nurse at a military hospital in Dhahran.

The two British women, both in their thirties, were being held in a police station and had been denied access to British embassy staff. If they are charged and found guilty of the murder, they could face the death penalty under Islamic Law. The British Consul, Tim Lamb, had been attempting to make contact with them since they were detained last Friday but had not been able to establish if they had been charged.

The two women were arrested following the killing of 55-year-old Yvonne Gilford at the King Fahd Military Medical Complex where all three were based. Ms Gilford, a senior theatre nurse from South Australia, was found dead in her room on 11 December. She had been stabbed four times, hit with a hammer and smothered.

According to sources at the hospital, police in Dhahran imposed a ban on all foreigners leaving the medical complex after her death. Around 40 British employees also had their passports confiscated. The Foreign Office in London would not

disclose the identities of the detained women.

Mr Lamb had also been trying to put pressure on Saudi officials to say whether the women had been charged - or to release them if they had not. "We are seeking urgent clarification on whether any charges are being brought," a spokesman said yesterday. "A member of staff is trying to seek immediate access."

The spokesman said that Mr Lamb was not allowed to enter the hospital yesterday after flying to Dhahran from Riyadh but was believed to have spoken to other British staff from the hospital.

Ms Gilford was half way through a 12-month contract when she was killed four days before her 56th birthday. She had been living in Johannesburg, South Africa, before arriving in Saudi Arabia and was described by colleagues as a "Florence Nightingale" who devoted her life to nursing.

The resistance of authorities in Saudi Arabia to outside influence in cases involving foreign nationals was highlighted in 1979 by the death of Helen Smith who fell to her death from a sixth-floor balcony during an illegal drinks party in Jeddah. Despite claims by many people, including her father, Ron, that she was murdered, an inquest into her death returned an open verdict.

## Hunger strike trucker suffers appeal delay

Jojo Moyes

A lorry driver imprisoned in Morocco is preparing to restart his hunger strike unless authorities fulfil their promise to give him a date for his appeal. Unless the appeal is lodged in time for Ramadan, the Muslim fast and Moroccan "pardon" season which begins in February, Steve Bryant, who was jailed for 10 years on drugs charges, has no chance of a pardon for a further year.

Stephano Jakobi, of the organisation Fair Trials Abroad, said: "He's extremely concerned that he'll miss the deadline and be stuck there."

Bryant, from north-east London, ended his previous hunger strike last month after Moroccan authorities promised him a firm date for his final appeal within 45 days.

He is now embarked on a race against time to lodge his appeal before Ramadan, although Mr Jakobi believes the Foreign Office is "dragging its feet", citing the example of Dutch truckers who were freed following intervention from their embassy. Bryant's MP, Steven Norris, wrote to the British ambassador in Morocco earlier this month, urging him to add his

voice to the drive for an appeal.

Mr Norris' letter states: "On 25 November at a meeting in the Moroccan embassy in London Mr Bryant's family were told that the only way Mr Bryant could be released was by a royal pardon on his behalf by members of his family and then forwarded by the Moroccan Ministry of Justice, adding that the family was given similar advice by their MEP."

The 42-year-old father of four, who has always pleaded his innocence, is one of a growing number of lorry drivers convicted for drugs smuggling.

In March 1993, returning from his third trip to Morocco, Bryant was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment after cannabis was found in his cargo of frozen squid. He is now two and a half years into his sentence with no possibility of an early release.

His case helped prompt a joint initiative between UK customs and the United Road Transport Union. The "Memorandum of Understanding" attempts to put drivers on a par with postmen, airline pilots and ships' captains in acknowledging that not all drivers are guilty when drugs are found in their charge.

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## international

# Israelis agree to Palestine state – in theory

The Netanyahu government is coming to terms with hard reality. Eric Silver reports

Jerusalem — Yesterday's apparent deal between the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat, and the Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, did not come as an extraordinary bolt from the blue. Last weekend, David Bar-Ilan, Mr Netanyahu's chief of planning and communications, said the unsayable. In a remarkably frank interview with the *Jerusalem Post*, he acquiesced in the creation of a Palestinian state.

It would have to be demilitarised, he insisted. It would not be free to sign a military alliance with the likes of Iran or Iraq. The bottom line was: "I want a state, but I want it to be limited and there."

Six months ago, Mr Bar-Ilan would have denounced such views as heresy. He and his boss have learned some hard lessons in office. If the interview reflects the Prime Minister's evolving position, it suggests that his gov-

ernment is coming to terms with the reality of a divided land, something which his Likud predecessors, Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir, never swallowed.

It suggests, however grudgingly, that Mr Netanyahu is braced to continue the Oslo peace programme, in deed as well as in rhetoric. Mr Arafat delayed signing a new deal on an Israeli redeployment from Hebron precisely because he feared the Prime Minister would then say: "Thus far and no further."

Mr Bar-Ilan was not providing a conclusive assurance. There will be hard and ugly bargaining to come, in the remaining stages of the Oslo II interim agreement, more Israeli evacuations, the freeing of Palestinian prisoners, the opening of "safe-passage" routes between Gaza and the West Bank, economic co-operation – and in the more traumatic negotiations for a final settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

There are contrary signals, like the government's pledge to expand Jewish settlement on the West Bank and in the Arab neighbourhoods of East Jerusalem, though so far these are more talk than action. But the interview was more

than a straw in the wind. Mr Arafat looks like having something to bargain for. Asked to define Mr Netanyahu's current ideological stand, Mr Bar-Ilan told his interviewer that the Prime Minister was no longer a "whole-land-of-Israel" man. "I don't think he feels that there is any chance of the Land of Israel remaining completely under the exclusive rule of Israel," he said.

The next day, Mr Bar-Ilan issued a statement distancing Mr Netanyahu from his aide's "private opinion". But the interview has not been repudiated, the chief of planning and communications is still at his post. Israeli commentators have noted, too, that Mr Netanyahu's right-wing Likud MPs have not yet demanded his head.

Until now Mr Bar-Ilan, the former editor of the *Jerusalem Post* and a close friend of the Prime Minister, has always taken as hard and as pessimistic a line as Mr Netanyahu. The Arabs, and in particular the Palestinians, had not changed their spots – he thundered in dozens of editorials. Their strategic aim was still to kill Jews and destroy the Zionist state.

Aryeh Naor, a former Likud loyalist who served as cabinet secretary under Menachem Begin, then defected to Shimon Peres's peace camp, commented yesterday: "There seems to be an ideological revolution on the right as they are detaching themselves from the Greater-Israel ideology. If Bar-Ilan talks this way, this tells you there is a new spirit of the times."

The signs are multiplying almost daily. The National Infrastructure Minister, Ariel Sharon, is backing the call for a national-unity government, or at least for a consensus of ideas, to negotiate a final settlement. The Israelis had to agree, the Likud maverick argued this week, on what they were prepared to give up and on what they would insist on keeping. Mr Sharon, the master settlement-builder of the Seventies and the Eighties, was talking territorial compromise.

At the same time, an informal group of Likud and Labour MPs, led by Michael Eitan and Yossi Beilin, has been meeting regularly to thrash out the terms of such a consensus. Mr Eitan is not a minister, but he is chairman of the coalition caucus. Mr Beilin, a candidate to succeed Mr Peres as Labour party leader, was one of the architects of the Oslo breakthrough.

Likud leaders, it seems, recognise that they cannot go back. They are committed, whether they like it or not, to completing the Oslo peace process. But they feel they can make the necessary painful concessions only with bipartisan support.



Window of opportunity: Released hostages being taken by bus yesterday for a medical check after their ordeal at the Japanese embassy in Lima. Photograph: Scott Dalton/AP

## Peruvian guerrillas free 225 hostages

Phil Davison  
Lima

Around 140 Peruvian government officials, Asian and Latin American diplomats and Japanese businessmen appear set to pass Christmas in the besieged Japanese ambassador's residence here, under the guns of more than 20 Tupac Amaru guerrillas and surrounded by increasingly impatient Peruvian commandos.

The guerrillas suddenly released 225 foreign hostages late on Sunday night, including Britain's deputy ambassador, Roger Church, and a British businessman, David Griffith, in what they called a goodwill gesture for Christmas.

But a communiqué from the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) leader, Nestor Cerna, showed

no sign that the rebels were hacking down. He said the remaining hostages would be released only if President Alberto Fujimori released several hundred Tupac Amaru prisoners from jail. Mr Fujimori has been adamant he will never do so.

Opinions were divided here as to whether releasing most of the foreigners made a military assault on the building more or less likely. Some Peruvians expressed concern that foreign television networks immediately started pulling out after their nationals were freed.

Mr Fujimori has threatened an assault if the guerrillas do not lay down their arms, but has been under heavy international pressure not to do so.

The fact that the guerrillas retained Japanese diplomats and businessmen was widely seen here as part of their

efforts to extort a "war tax" – a cash ransom from wealthy Japanese corporations whose executives are still held. After releasing "those not linked to the Peruvian government", holding the Japanese businessmen made no sense other than for money, several diplomats said.

Peruvian police claimed yesterday that the Tupac Amaru guerrillas, before the Lima siege, routinely earned more than \$1m a year from ransoms through kidnappings.

It was a dramatic scene on Sunday night as the foreign hostages began appearing, boarded buses and gazed or waved at hundreds of journalists, television lights and flashing cameras.

To fit on to six buses for the trip to a police hospital for a medical check, many were forced to stand in the aisles. But for the crumpled dark evening suits

they had worn to attend a Christmas cocktail party, they could have been weary Peruvians returning from work.

Some looked exhausted, confused and unshaven. Others smiled and gave victory signs. Some still wore ties. Others wore sports shirts provided by Red Cross workers.

On the first bus was Mr Church, Britain's Deputy Chief of Mission, who spent 122 hours as a hostage. His boss, the British ambassador, had left the party just before the guerrilla assault.

Appearing on the steps of the British embassy building yesterday, Mr Church, 50, said: "I've had some very difficult days. But I'm just glad to be reunited with my family at Christmas."

"Obviously, my thoughts are with those still held captive and I hope the situation will be resolved very rapidly. At no time were we mistreated."

They treated us as well as could be expected. I hope the situation is going to be resolved through negotiations. I believe the Peruvian government is prepared to negotiate. There is not going to be a violent solution to this."

He added: "Originally, their [the guerrillas'] demands were very clear – the release of 400 prisoners. It seems to me that particular demand has been reduced somewhat." That remark appeared to contradict the guerrillas' own communiqué.

Mr Griffith, born and raised in Peru and holding dual nationality, is general manager of the well-known Hotel Las Americas in Lima. He did not immediately speak to the media.

All seven American hostages – three diplomats and four US Agency for International Development employees – were also among those freed.



Netanyahu: Set to continue Oslo peace programme

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## Yeltsin returns to his Kremlin desk

Helen Womack  
Moscow

Boris Yeltsin returned to work in the Kremlin yesterday, seven weeks after his heart bypass operation, and promised that life for Russians would get better in the new year.

In effect, the 65-year-old President was only just starting his second term of office. Immediately after the elections last July he had disappeared from public view, suffering again from the heart trouble which dogged him through much of 1995. After his operation on 5 November, he was obliged to follow doctors' orders and convalesce outside Moscow.

Although the world's camera crews have been trying to follow his every movement, journalists missed Mr Yeltsin's discreet return to his Moscow residence over the weekend. But television cameras caught his motorcade driving in through the Kremlin's Borovitsky Gate at 9.30am yesterday. In the yard, he was greeted by

the Kremlin commandant. "I'm feeling fine, ready for battle," Mr Yeltsin, dressed in an overcoat and fur hat against the December cold, said.

On his first day back at work, Mr Yeltsin was briefed by his chief of administration, Anatoly Chubais, a young market economist hated by the Communist opposition. Today he will meet his Prime Minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin who, together with Mr Chubais, has been running the country in his absence.

Mr Yeltsin found time yesterday to speak on the telephone to John Major, who wished him well and promised to visit Russia in 1997. He has already chatted with his friend "Bill", the United States President, and hopes to travel to Washington next March.

But domestic problems are pressing. Millions of workers and pensioners have gone without wages and state allowances for months. The unreformed

army, humiliated in Chechnya and lacking the funds to feed and house its officers and conscripts, is in a dire condition.

On the surface, Russia has changed considerably in the five years since the collapse of the Soviet Union. But in practice, millions of Russians still feel only the pain of market reform.

In a television address to the nation on Friday, Mr Yeltsin said he would make it his priority to address social issues. "Quality of life" would be the new catchword and officials who did not pay sufficient attention to the needs of the people would be sacked, he declared.

The words were tough but the delivery was wooden. Asked about a charge from Mr Yeltsin's rival General Alexander Lebed that the Kremlin leader had started drinking again, Michael De Bakke, the Texas surgeon who was a consultant during the operation, said tactfully that a tippie would not hurt the President but he should resist heavy drinking.



Back to work: President Yeltsin returning to the Kremlin in Moscow yesterday. Photograph: Reuters

## Jail for teller of tall TV stories

Imre Karacs  
Bonn

A German television reporter with a talent for fairy tales will be spending Christmas in jail for the next four years, imprisoned yesterday for stretching his creative licence too far.

Michael Born, a 38-year-old freelancer, was convicted in his home town of Koblenz of fraud, incitement to racial hatred, cruelty to animals and driving without a permit. He had sold commercial companies at least 16 "documentaries" which had owed more to his fertile imagination than to facts.

His highly praised "report" on a chapter of the Ku Klux Klan terrorising forest folk in the Rhineland might have won a prize, had it not been debunked by a policeman. Born had clad some friends in white tunics and hoods, recorded their anti-Semitic rantings and sprinkled the footage with swastikas.

He also dabbled in smuggling, interviewed fictitious terrorist leaders and staged a blood-soaked battle on the Albanian-Greek border.

Confronted with damning evidence during his trial, Born said: "I feel guilty towards the viewers, but not towards the television newsmen."

His defence rested on the premise that his customers were aware they were purchasing entertainment, not journalism. Dozens of witnesses testified that the cable and satellite channels competing for Born's business could have checked the veracity of his reports. They did not, because they were scared of losing a "good story".

By implication, the judge, Ulrich Weiland, found the entire industry guilty of fraud. But only Born will pay for the crime. The moguls who financed his antics remain at liberty.

## Six teeming floors of oriental pleasure – all yours for just 15p

In Shanghai did Huang Chujiu a state-ly pleasure dome decree. And almost 80 years later the "Great World" amusement mansion still stands at the south-east corner of Shanghai's People's Square, its "wedding cake" tower a monument to an enduring tendency over decades of political upheaval to the pursuit of a good night out.

Now, just as then, the masses queue for an entrance ticket to this multi-level emporium of entertainment. From the ground floor, with its dogeared cars and acrobats, one climbs balustraded staircases up six storeys teeming with every conceivable diversion. A ghost train, opera performances, video-games, a cinema showing a dubbed American B-movie, and even stock market leech-ins vie to attract the biggest

crowds. In one booth a couple of middle-aged ladies in white coats wield an electric palm-reader with which they promise to diagnose troubled internal organs. Great World even offers a cheap shower, as betrayed by the succession of freshly scrubbed young women visitors exiting from the lift.

Thousands pass through Great World's doors each day, especially after 6.30pm when the basic entrance ticket drops from a daytime price of 20 yuan to 2 yuan (15p). For Shanghai's migrant labour force, just arrived from the countryside, it offers the best value entertainment in town. Better-heeled Chinese visitors pay 13 yuan extra for a dancing ticket. Middle-aged unemployed locals, and old-aged pensioners come for the day. "It is the most famous place in Shanghai," declared the lift attendant, all of whose 25 working years have been spent within Great World's walls.

Of course, it must be admitted that the fifth floor of Great World is no longer quite what it was. After the Hollywood film director Josef von Sternberg toured the premises in the mid-thirties, he noted in his memoirs: "The fifth floor featured girls whose dresses were sewed to the armpits, a stuffed whale, story-tellers, balloons, peep-shows, masks, a mirror maze, two love-letter booths with scribes who guaranteed results, 'rubber goods' and a temple filled with ferocious gods and joss sticks." These days, the fifth floor is home instead

### SHANGHAI DAYS

to a large children's playroom. Take a wander down to the fourth floor, however, and the old Shanghai spirit is alive and pulsing. The modern day heirs to Great World's famed sing-song girls are back in action in a packed auditorium with no room left for standing. The troupe is short on songs, but the exotic fashion show (the billboard stretches linguistic definition by calling it "dancing") has an almost wholly male audience straining to glimpse the midriff flesh.

Von Sternberg described Great World as a "condensed world", and it has remained so through the century. It was opened in 1917, then China's biggest entertainment centre, by

Huang Chujiu, who had made his fortune from marketing a brain tonic. By the early Thirties, the pleasure dome had passed into the hands of one of Shanghai's leading gangsters. Pockmarked Huang, who made sure the vice quotient increased with every staircase climbed. An official Chinese history of old Shanghai published in 1985 described Great World in the years before the 1949 communist victory as "a paradise for monsters and demons and a den for enemy agents and traitors camouflaged by beautiful music and graceful dancing".

The local government took control of Great World in 1954 and it was converted into the distinctly more wholesome Shanghai Youth Palace. Even that was deemed unsuitable when the Cultural Revolution broke out in 1966 and the building was slammed shut.

The lift lady remembered how in 1971, as a 20-year-old, she was sent to work in the kitchen of Great World, even though there were no visitors. Two years later, on 1 October 1973, the building was re-opened for politically correct entertainment for children. But it was not until 1983, when she moved from the kitchen to the lift, that Great World started to shelve ideology in favour of fun.

Shanghai in the mid-nineties throbs with bars, clubs and restaurants, fiercely competing for customers. They change hands regularly, and go in and out of business. Great World is so far the great survivor, attracting both those who can afford nothing better, and others still compelled by its cornucopia of delights.

Teresa Poole

دولت اسلامی



# France abandons itself to Christmas venison, truffles and red, red wine

**Mary Dejevsky** counts the cost of Gallic cheer and celebration

Anyone with qualms about conspicuous consumption would do well to give France a wide berth at Christmas. For two weeks now, the markets have been stuffed to bursting with seasonal fare. From oysters and lobsters to *foie gras* and game of every variety, everything is available (at a price), and nothing disguises its origins.

The *foie gras* is displayed in windows full of cheerful-looking china ducks and geese. The haunches of venison and boar still bear their bristles. Flocks of pheasant and partridge hang in full feather, while the capons, France's most sought-after Christmas dish, are laid carefully side by side, their heads resplendent with red comb and ginger feathers.

In the chocolate shops and patisseries, the myriad St Nicholases of early December have come and gone, replaced by the chocolate and coffee logs that are the French family Christmas pudding.

But you can't escape temptation by steering clear of the markets. In the days before the feast, the French media provide constant updates on the food situation - and not just in the commercial hells.

Some 90 minutes' viewing on Sunday evening, which included the main news on two channels, provided reports and features that amounted to an almost complete Christmas menu.

A documentary on smoked salmon detailed the different methods of preparation and explained why some people are prepared to pay up to 70 per cent more for the "hand-smoked, hand-sliced" variety, even though "no one really smokes over wood any more, whatever the label says".

A feature on truffles - from detection by truffle-hound, through hush-hush negotiation of the sale at market, to what the top chefs do with them - followed hard on the heels of a discussion of *foie gras*. "The first question," said the elegant blonde expert, "is: duck or goose. A majority choose duck: it's slightly smoother, more perfumed."

And what, said the hapless interviewer, about *mousse de foie gras*? "Our expert said, with a patronising smile: 'Ah well, that's something quite different. If we're honest, it's bought by people who can't afford *foie gras*. It's very tasty, but it's not *foie gras*'."

A couple of days earlier, the evening news had regaled us with information about the country's favourite oysters this season (from Marennes in western France, should you want to know), and the latest episode of the perennial debate on

new-fangled ways to open them. But the drawback to Christmas, of course, is the bill. The "average" family - one French market researcher estimates - will spend 149 francs (£17) per head on the Christmas meal this year, up Fr9 since last year and well ahead of inflation. It did not say whether this was because people were splashing out a little more, or whether the price of luxury foods has just risen more than that of other goods.

The menu, and the budget, look something like this: oysters (Fr70 to Fr110 a dozen, at least six each); *foie gras* (Fr200 buys a pot just sufficient for eight); a fair-sized capon (Fr350), and a chocolate log - Fr170-plus even from the most ordinary patisserie.

Christmas around the world: Many have far too little and quite a few have had far too much

## Write-on Santa works miracles

**Verena Dobnik**  
Associated Press

New York - The envelope is addressed simply to "Dear Santa". The letter inside pleads, politely: "May you get me a wheelchair. I need the wheelchair to be powered. I need it to get around. Can you help me Santa? I would do anything for this... Love always, Miracle Retrina."

The nine-year-old, born with no arms and only one functional leg, wrote the faint, crooked words by pushing a pencil with her left foot. Now Miracle Retrina Womack awaits a miracle, and Guillermo "Cigi" Colon is ready to help. "This is what life is really about," Ms Colon says, clutching the child's note as she dashes through the cavernous halls of the General Post Office in Manhattan, smiling at co-workers who greet her with "Hi Santa!"

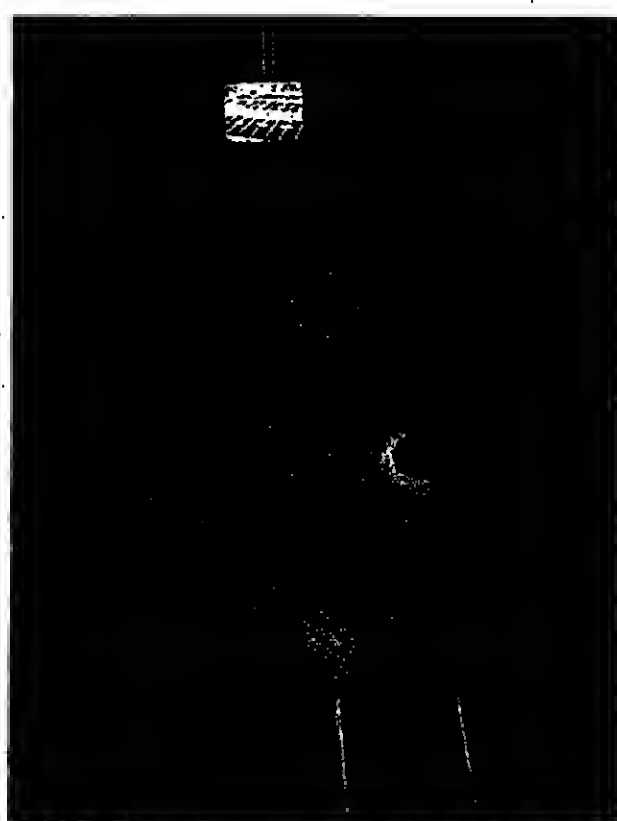
The jolly, Dominican-born pixie is the energy behind "Operation Santa Claus", which makes Christmas dreams come true at the city's huge mail post office, next to Penn Station and Madison Square Garden. A record 153,000 Dear Santa letters had arrived by Friday

to be sorted, computerised and made available to anyone who wants to become an instant guardian angel. Some come from as far away as South Africa and Japan. "Most post offices in the world know about us," Ms Colon, head of customer relations, said.

Operation Santa Claus was started nearly 70 years ago by postal workers who answered letters that were headed for the dustbin. It now attracts gifts from individuals and businesses, and is mirrored around the country at 84 other postal service consumer affairs offices.

About one-third of the New York letters are "adopted". People can pick through boxes of letters from the city's five boroughs, as well as "Foreign", "New Jersey", "Spanish" and "Mixed States". The opportunities do not end at Christmas. Hispanic children traditionally receive gifts on Epiphany in January.

Among them are requests from a New York child for spaghetti, rice and beans, blankets, a coat and "if you can", a real live bunny. A girl with real live mice in her house asks for a mouse trap. Another child wants a cherry-red Cadillac



Waiting game: Santa relaxes before appearing at the Carolina Panthers/Pittsburgh Steelers American football match in Charlotte, North Carolina. Photograph: AP

with matching leather interior. Ms Colon, 45, who puts in hundreds of unpaid hours, lives with two grown sons and a two-year-old granddaughter, this

year chose a letter from a single mother with three children in Brooklyn and will give them tickets for the Broadway musical *Cats*.

## Bondi revellers have to dry up

**Robert Mullen**  
Sydney

After the worst year in its history, Bondi beach has gone on to full alert to head off another Christmas of violence. In recent years the beach has been taken over on Christmas Day by thousands of British backpackers for whom turkey, plum pudding and champagne by the surf has become something of an irresistible cultural ritual. Last year the mix of sun, sand and alcohol proved a disaster and riot police were called in on Christmas night to control crowds throwing stones and bottles. Several police were injured and dozens of rioters were arrested.

In September, Bondi's reputation was further tarnished when Brian Hagland, 28, a British tourist, was killed near the beach. A man has been charged with the killing.

This Christmas, at the prompting of Bondi residents, the New South Wales government and Waverley council, which covers the area, hired two events-organisers to "reclaim" the beach. Tomorrow, alcohol and cars will be banned from

most of the beach zone, celebrities will entertain crowds and, for the equivalent of £5, backpackers will receive one alcoholic drink, a barbecue lunch and a phone card to ring home.

Last year, 20,000 people packed Bondi beach on Christmas Day, planting their national flags in the sand. Trouble began when hot-rod car enthusiasts invaded the beach front and taunted revellers in an atmosphere already electric with alcohol and expectation. "Most of those who come to Bondi for Christmas, the backpackers and tourists, are the orphans of the city," said Ricki McDonald, a psychologist and co-organiser of the reclaim Bondi event. Last year she and her partner transformed another riot-torn beach, at Byron Bay, into a safe Christmas haven. She has a strategy to do the same thing at Bondi: "We'll move people around, keep them excited and turn them out at the end of the night when their energy is dissipated."

Will it work? "Alcohol, testosterone and boredom are not a good mix. It's all a matter of giving them something to do," said Ms McDonald.

## School fight highlights American divide

Washington - It all began with a visit by a white newspaper reporter earlier this month to check on the progress of a new black school, boasting a combative principal and a heavily Afro-centric curriculum. What happened next has unleashed racial uproar, and could conceivably change the direction of the city's electoral politics.

Last week, Mary Anigbo, the principal of the Marcus Garvey Charter School, which opened its doors to 62 pupils in September, was indicted by a DC grand jury along with three staff members on misdemeanor charges of assaulting Susan Ferrechio, of the *Washington Times*.

Ms Ferrechio says she went to the school to see Ms Anigbo. As she waited, she interviewed a student, only for a school official to demand her notebook. When she refused, she claims she was set upon by the principal, staff and students who kicked her and made racial taunts before throwing her off the premises. Ms Anigbo contends the reporter pushed her, threatened to use

Racial harmony seems further away than ever in Washington but at last the President is taking notice, writes Rupert Cornwell

mace (a blinding chemical spray used to ward off attackers) and a knife, and warned she was going to "get you black people out of the building".

Within two hours Ms Ferrechio was back at the school with two police officers and a *Washington Times* photographer who in his turn was attacked when he started to take pictures, as were the police when they intervened. Finally order was restored, but the real trouble had only begun.

For contemporary Washington's poisonous brew of discredited local government, virtual financial collapse, a school system acknowledged as one of the country's worst, and ever-present racial tensions, the confrontation was one ingredient too many.

A legal verdict will only be delivered by a court. But both communities have already rendered their different judgements. For the white-dominated Washington establishment, the

affair simply highlighted the prevailing anarchy of the city's public education system, which led to the appointment last month of Julius Beeton, a former army general, whose first step was to sack the entire existing District of Columbia school board.

The fact that Marcus Garvey - which enjoys private status although mostly funded by public money - does not come under the general's jurisdiction, has only increased the outrage - as did the revelation that Ms Anigbo had been charged in 1986 with assault with a deadly weapon, and that one of the security guards at the school had been convicted of armed robbery.

But the city's 70 per cent black majority tends to see matters through a different prism. Courtland Milloy, a black columnist on the *Washington Post*, wrote of a caller who likened the incident to "that historic racial conflict, Missy-versus-Mammy. It's an arrogant

white girl who thinks she owns the house, and a big black woman saying, 'Just stay out of my kitchen'."

Small wonder then that the confrontation has been so jarring. Even more so, it has come amid with faint but distinct stirrings of hope for Washington.

After four years of almost total indifference to the problems of the city where he lives, President Clinton is now promising a "serious effort" by the White House to help, while Hillary Clinton says she will henceforth devote her formidable energy and talents to the capital's plight.

But the essential precondition for a lasting revival of Washington remains the departure of its mayor, Marion Barry, who has been stripped of most real power by the financial control board which took charge of the city's budget 15 months ago, but his re-election in 1994 after serving time for a cocaine

offence makes him, in the eyes of most Americans, the symbol of the apparent deathwish of the capital. And here too, the Marcus Garvey fracas may have an impact. Mr Barry, first elected in 1978, has not said whether he will seek a fifth term in 1998. But a possible contender touted by the *Washington Post* and much of the city establishment is Eric Holder, one of the district's leading federal prosecutors - who referred the Anigbo case to the grand jury.

Mr Holder is black, but unlike Mr Barry, comparatively pale-skinned. He is accused by some of Ms Anigbo's supporters of practising "vintage white racism". Last week he told the *Post* of his misgivings about a mayoral run. "There's an question about it, one of the shots that would be taken at me is, 'Is he black enough?' - Is this guy one of us?"

Immediately after securing the indictments, he appealed for calm and for Washingtonians of both races "not to permit this incident to increase polarisation".

## significant shorts

### OJ is killer in son's murder mystery story

OJ Simpson's eight-year-old son wrote a fictional murder mystery for a school assignment that ended with his father being the killer, a television station reported.

The story, which featured a killer holding a hostage with a knife and machine-gun, was written by Justin Simpson in autumn and was used as evidence in the battle between Mr Simpson and his former in-laws for custody of Justin and his 11-year-old sister, Sydney. KCBS-TV reported. Mr Simpson was awarded full custody of his two younger children on Friday. They had been living with their maternal grandparents since their mother, Nicole Brown Simpson and her friend, Ronald Goldman, were killed in June 1994.

Mr Simpson was acquitted in October 1995 of double murder in the deaths of Goldman and Simpson. He is now being sued for wrongful death by the estate of Simpson and the Goldman family. AP - Los Angeles

### Diamond ring returned to TWA woman

A diamond ring found amid debris of the jet after the explosion of flight TWA 800 off New York in July was to be returned to the woman who had fought to get it back since the crash, which killed her fiancé, Andrew Krukar. "This is bitter-sweet," Julie Stuart said. "I only wish it was the way it was supposed to be, with Andy placing it on my finger." A friend of Krukar's in Paris spotted a photo of the box containing the ring in a French magazine and recognised it. AP - New York

### Villagers give mice the chop

Villagers in Vietnam's Ha Tinh province have been offered a reward for each mouse tail they bring in from the fields. *Los Angeles Times* reported that in one village 4m dong (\$485) had been paid for 45,000 tails. A total of 420,000 had been collected in the district of Huong Son, it added, without indicating what would be done with them. Reuters - Hanoi

### Bosnia eases hated curfew

Bosnia suspended a curfew in Sarajevo and other towns that remained despite the end of the war. The Interior Ministry said the suspension would last until 15 February because of celebrations and events marking Christmas, New Year's Day and Ramadan next month. The curfew is disliked and radio stations have criticised the authorities for keeping it. Sarajevo - Reuters

### Algiers bomb kills three

A car bomb exploded near one of the capital's biggest cafes, killing at least three people and wounding 70. It went off when the pavements and streets were filled with lunch-hour traffic. The explosion was felt throughout central Algiers. AP - Algiers

### Havel out of intensive care

The Czech President, Vaclav Havel, has been moved out of intensive care three weeks after surgery to remove a tumour from his lung, but he will have to spend Christmas in hospital. It is not yet clear how long it will be before Mr Havel can go home. Prague - Reuters

### Weddings take on air of danger

People firing bullets in the air to express joy at weddings had jeopardised aircraft. Kuwait's aviation authority said that in one village 4m dong (\$485) had been paid for 45,000 tails. A total of 420,000 had been collected in the district of Huong Son, it added, without indicating what would be done with them. Reuters - Hanoi

### Weizman says sorry to gays

The Israeli President, Ezer Weizman, met gay leaders and apologised for publicly deriding homosexuality as "abnormal". His spokesman, Arieh Shumer, said: "The President says he must express sorrow for any act or comment that causes public humiliation or can be interpreted as such. It is necessary to guard the honour, rights and welfare of all the citizens of the state of Israel." Mr Weizman, whose role is largely symbolic, took aim at homosexuals during a speech last week to high-school pupils in Haifa. Reuters - Jerusalem

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# Professor Keith Ruddock

Keith Ruddock was an outstanding scientist who all his adult life was committed to teaching and research at Imperial College, London.

He was born into a South Wales mining village; its culture and the influences of his family were never to leave him. His family's love of music and concern for the social causes of the Welsh valleys led to his abiding love of opera and to his passionate commitment to socialism.

His family had great ambitions for him and at West Monmouth Grammar School his exceptional mathematical abilities were recognised. In 1957 he became a student in the Physics Department at the Imperial College of Science and Technology, and there he spent the rest of his academic career. He came under the influence of Professor David Wright, the doyen of colour vision, which

led him to devote his subsequent research to the study of vision. He became a leading and highly innovative exponent of the application of psychophysics (the investigation of the relations between physical stimuli and sensation) to the study of vision in human subjects.

Not content with extending understanding of normal vision he turned to studies of the nature of visual abnormalities exhibited by a variety of clinical patients, many of whom had suffered brain damage as a result of a stroke or tumour. His studies were carried out not only to enhance understanding of the normal mechanisms of visual processing, but to offer practical assistance to the patient. Ruddock was a brilliant experimentalist who when presented with such a patient would rapidly devise a series of experiments, which would be speedily executed following modifications of the hallmark of the visual psychophysicist, the optical bench.

This consists of a series of mirrors, lenses, filters and light sources, which when viewed by the uninitiated gives the impression of science performed with string and sealing wax, but in the hands of Ruddock provided measurements of the highest precision. For the subject the experiments could be fairly demanding, but here Ruddock's humanity was apparent. Several of his subjects returned time and time again to his laboratories over extended periods, in some cases in excess of 20 years. If the patient was unable to travel to London Ruddock would devise suitable portable equipment to take the laboratory into the patient's home. His patients became his friends as did almost everyone who entered his life.

In 1972 he was awarded a Royal Society Exchange Fellowship to work in Venezuela with Gunnar Svaetichin, a pioneer in single-cell electrophysiological recording. This enabled Ruddock on his return to establish in Imperial's country establishment at Silwood Park, a separate research programme in which he recorded from within cells in the retina, the light-sensitive tissue at the back of the eye. Both his electrophysiological and psychophysical studies led him into controversial areas in the field of vision; he defended his position strongly whilst always being prepared to listen and debate with the opposition.

Throughout his life at Imperial he was committed to undergraduate and postgraduate education, and actively involved in the organisation of teaching. He was an excellent lecturer who delighted in being able to bring biology to physics students steeped in mathematics and the physical sciences. Every year, after hearing his lectures, students flocked to his door to carry out final-year projects or PhDs under his supervision. In 1988 he was appointed Professor of Biophysics, and in 1991 Head of the Biophysics Group in the Physics Department. Over the years Ruddock developed an extended international network of former students whom he greatly enjoyed visiting. This and frequent requests to lecture abroad fed his passion for travel, which was made all the more pleasurable by his gift for languages, which extended to Chinese - studied as a challenge.

Outside Imperial College he was on several editorial boards and national committees. He particularly enjoyed his work on the Vision Research Working Party of the Wellcome Trust. In 1985 with three other visual scientists and clinicians he formed the Neuro-ophthalmology Club and it was his enthusiasm and interest which has ensured its continued success.



Ruddock: humanitarian

Ruddock was an ardent follower of sport, especially Welsh rugby and cricket, although here he was a Lancashire supporter. An accomplished violinist, he was involved in the musical life of Imperial, but it was his burning love of opera that was evident to all around him. He regularly visited the Royal Opera House and had in recent weeks been contemplating its forthcoming temporary closure for redevelopment, and whether to sign up for opera seasons in houses as far afield as New York, Paris or Vienna.

In 1963 he married Joan Anthony, a teenage friend who had followed him to study at Imperial College. Coming from the same background their 30 years together were spent sharing similar ideals, particularly a passion for socialism which eventually led Joan to become a Labour Member of Parliament.

They separated in 1990. Keith Ruddock was a scientist and humanitarian who showed absolute loyalty to his friends. His untimely and sudden death came just hours after he remarked that he had had one of the most successful years ever in his scientific career with a stream of exciting new observations. There was an irony in his death's resulting from a motor vehicle accident; it was a form of transportation Ruddock disliked and he had never considered it necessary to learn to drive.

Christopher Kennard

Keith Harry Ruddock, biophysicist: born Croesycylio, South Wales 12 March 1939; Professor of Biophysics, Imperial College of Science, Technology and Medicine 1988-96; married 1963 Joan Anthony; died London 20 December 1996.

## Gwilym Lewis

Gwilym Lewis was the oldest survivor of the Royal Flying Corps and, having shot down 12 enemy aircraft, their last ace. He numbered among his friends Mick Mannock VC, who was credited with 72 enemy aircraft. There now remains only one surviving RFC pilot, Cecil Lewis, the author of *Sagittarius Rising*.

Lewis was born in Birmingham in 1897. He was educated at Marlborough College and in 1915 volunteered for the Northampton Regiment. After three weeks he found it was hard work and applied for a transfer to the RFC. They were full, and he was advised to obtain a private flying certificate. He asked his father for £100, enrolled at Hendon and qualified that November on a Grahame White Boxkite; three weeks later so did his father.

After a basic course of instruction at Farnborough he was posted to Upavon, the RFC's Central Flying School and in April 1916 was awarded his pilot's brevet (wings). He then joined 32 Squadron and on 29 May, with only four and a half hours of flying in a DH2, flew with his squadron to France in a clapped-out plane while anxiously looking for a ship to land alongside in case his engine failed.

Although the youngest pilot of the squadron he was soon in action. Nearly 80 years later when I interviewed him for a book (*There Shall be Wings*: the RAF 1918 to the present day, 1995) he recalled an occasion on patrol in September 1916:

"I was well above the rest when I spotted a two-seater Roland. I couldn't see his crosses until he passed right over, then I could see the observer looking over the side with his gun pointing straight at me. I went as white as a ghost, but for some reason he did not open fire."

He then described the major offensive south-west of Bapaume later that month when tanks went into action. "It was an incredible sight. We were going to win the war! All the infantry camps were moving cheering the tanks. We saw no German aircraft. We dominated the skies - the infantry the ground. But it was all so short-lived. The casualties were terrible. I don't know how they stood it."

Lewis was to lose many friends from his squadron, but his most heartfelt loss was his elder brother Edmund, an experienced pilot who was shot down on his father's birthday after a single-handed fight with five enemy aircraft. It was a loss



"It was an incredible sight. We were going to win the war." Wing Commander 'Noisy' Lewis at the controls of an SESA, in France, 1918

from which his father never recovered.

In September 1917 Gwilym Lewis was given command of an SESA flight training pilots and then made a Flight Commander of 40 Squadron. Another Flight Commander was Mick Mannock, who named Lewis "Noisy" because he was so quiet.

In July 1918 Lewis was awarded the DFC. He was exhausted - and wise enough at 21 to realise this. Other pilots more experienced were not. On his last day in France at his farewell lunch, he recalled Mannock's taking the great Irish ace G.E.H. McElroy to one side and warning him not to follow the enemy down, because ground fire would get him. Six days later Mannock himself was killed by ground fire following down a two-seater. Five days after that McElroy was also shot down.

The final month of 1918 was spent as an instructor at CFS, Upavon. Lewis decided against a career in the new RAF and was demobilised in 1919. He

was 21. He was never to fly a plane again.

Lewis's qualities as both a pilot and a leader are possibly best exemplified by the fact that he never lost a novice pilot. When a new boy joined his squadron he would have him beside him, coax him and nurse him until he matured. (Sixty years later he received a note from one of those novice pilots: "With grateful thanks to Wing Commander 'Noisy' Lewis DFC - my first World War Commander - and due to his splendid leadership I have been able to enjoy such a long and happy aerial life.")

After such an intense war in which command had come naturally to him, Lewis had some difficulty adjusting to a very junior position with the Lloyd's insurance brokers Sedgwick. Collins, especially as he was under the authority of men for whom he had little regard. However he soon joined up with old RFC pals also at Lloyd's and with them shared a cottage by the Thames at Wargrave. It was

here that he met the 20-year-old Noël Coward who one Sunday read his first play, *The Rat Trap*, to Lewis and his friends as they languished in a punt.

In 1923 in bowler hat and rolled umbrella he went to America as the man from Lloyd's and on his return argued for a separate American Non-Marine Department, which upset a few people at Sedgwick's. When the crash came in 1929 he survived well although like everyone he had to face a reduction in salary. In 1925 he had married Christian Robertson and was happily married for 68 years. By 1939 he had built up an American Non-Marine Department into the biggest department in Sedgwick. Collins.

During the Second World War Lewis was given the rank of Wing Commander and was part of the Cabinet War Room team. There he prepared detailed reports based on the previous 24 hours for the morning briefing. Ever eager to support the RAF, he guided the lily

once too often and Churchill good-naturedly returned the paper with the comment "No trench raids please!"

Throughout the war he retained contact with his firm and had copies of their cables sent to him. However during the time he was away there were many changes and in 1947, after more than 25 years' service, they decided to continue without him. Lewis then joined Arbon Langrish and on the death of the senior partner became chairman. He successfully built up the American side of the business before selling out to Clarkson in 1965. However he maintained a lifelong interest in Lloyd's and was their oldest member.

Max Arthur

Gwilym Hugh Lewis, aviator and insurance broker: born Birmingham 5 August 1897; DFC 1918; married 1925 Christian Robertson (died 1993); one son, two daughters, and one son deceased; died London 18 December 1996.

## Esther Simpson

Esther Simpson's life's work was with the Academic Assistance Council (AAC), the body set up to rescue refugee scholars from Germany. It was created shortly after Hitler came to power on 30 January 1933 by Sir William Beveridge, Lord Rutherford, A.V. Hill and Archbishop Temple. They needed a secretary. They found "Tess" Simpson.

She had been working with the World Alliance of YMCAs in Geneva but realised at once that this was a calling. She came to London and started work at £2 10s a week; a third of what she had been earning previously. Her office was in a tiny attic at Burlington House in the Royal Society. If the accommodation was poor, at least the address was good.

On 7 April 1933 a law was passed in Germany "restructuring" the civil service - and dismissing all Jews from it. Scientists flooded over. The AAC gave them a small salary and helped to find posts. At that time, in the Great Depression, other countries, especially the United States, were reluctant to admit outsiders but Britain was more welcoming. (Later America took large numbers.) The richness of the refugee haul was extraordinary, including Einstein, Max Born, Fritz Haber and James Franck (all Nobel laureates).

Academics of that level had no difficulty finding support; for example, the Austrian physicist Erwin Schrödinger was made a Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford within five days of arriving in England. Among the 2,600 refugees who were less well known, the AAC helped 16 who later won Nobel prizes, 74 who became Fellows of the Royal Society, 34 of the British Academy. To Tess Simpson, all the refugees were her "children".

Her toughness and determination were shown to their greatest advantage in the summer of 1940 when, after the betrayal of Norway and the German attack in the West, several hundred aliens were suddenly interned. Simpson and A.V. Hill, himself a Nobel laureate as well as MP for Cambridge University, were useless in pressing for their early release. Each case had to be argued with the Home Office and Tess Simpson prepared 560 applications. In the end - but how slow the process seemed - they succeeded.

Simpson had hoped that after the war there would be no need for the Society for the Protection of Science and Learning (as the AAC was called from 1936), but that was far from true, with a steady stream of refugee academics from around the world.

Tess Simpson was born in Leeds in 1903. At Leeds University she took a first class degree in Modern Languages and then spent several years in Austria and Switzerland before beginning her life's work. In 1949 the French government awarded her the Ordre des Palmes Académiques. She was appointed OBE in 1956, the universities of London and Leeds awarded her honorary degrees in the 1980s, and in 1991 she was elected an honorary member of the Royal College of Physicians.

She retired in 1978 but kept in touch with her "family" until three days before she died, when she attended the physicist Sir Nevill Martin's memorial service. When an informal book on her life appeared in 1992, it was launched by two members of the Order of Merit, Max Perutz and Sir Ernst Gombrich, which gives some idea of how she was regarded, and by whom.

Meeting her for the first time one could be forgiven for not realising her stature and achievements, so modest was



Tough and determined: Simpson drawn by Hanna Schiff, 1933

she. She was calm, lively and forthcoming to the end.

Jean Medawar and David Fyke

Chamber music played an essential part throughout Tess Simpson's life, entwined with her work and her friendships, writes John Hurder. It was a decisive influence at certain points in her career, as when, in 1928, she was finally persuaded to move to Vienna to work for the Fellowship of Reconciliation by a Viennese student with whom she played in London.

She had started violin lessons aged nine (at a shilling a lesson), and became an amateur of professional standard, with whom professionals were happy to play; during and just after the war she was a pupil of Max Rostal, the only amateur to be so. She continued to play both violin and viola until deafness intervened in her seventies. "Music enriched my life by providing me with wonderful friends - meeting a musician was so often like a pebble cast in a pool whose ripples go on to eternity."

Esther Simpson, refugee coordinator: born Leeds 31 July 1903; OBE 1956; died London 19 November 1996.

## William Rushton

Anthony Hayward's warm obituary of William Rushton [13 December] says that he was a "lifelong Labour Party supporter". I find this slightly odd, writes Michael Meadowcroft, since I recall meeting William Rushton in the very early 1960s when he was the in-house cartoonist on *Liberal News*, producing a splendid strip cartoon each week, plus other one-off efforts.

Chris Booker was also with *Liberal News* at the same time and the two of them would delight in rushing the first issues of *Private Eye* back to Liberal Party HQ. Their increasing absences to produce *Private Eye*

were, I believe, one reason why the party parted company with Willie and Chris.

William Rushton's final cartoon strip contained a character in each frame waving semaphore flags, the message of which was a farewell message of two words connected with sex and transport.

## Births, Marriages & Deaths

### DEATHS

**DONSKA** Maria, pianist, born 1912, died 21 December 1996, at home, Cumnor, Oxford, at 8pm, Friday 21 December, at Boughlyth Malherbe Church, near Leamham, Maidstone, Kent. No funeral please, but donations to the Musicians' Benevolent Fund.

### IN MEMORIAM

**PARKIAN** In loving memory of Mary Parkian, who died on Christmas Eve, 1987.

Announcements for Gazette BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS (Births, Deaths, Marriages, Deaths, Memorial services, Wedding anniversaries, In Memoriam) should be sent in writing to the Gazette Editor, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5UL, telephoned to 0171-293 2011 (24-hour answering machine 0171-293 2012 or faxed to 0171-293 2010, and are charged at £5.50 a line (VAT extra). OTHER Gazette announcements (funerals, marriages, Birthdays, Deaths, Marriages) must be submitted in writing (or faxed) and are charged at £10 a line (VAT extra). They should be accompanied by a daytime telephone number.

### Changing of the Guard

**CHRISTMAS EVE** The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment moves the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am. **NEW YEAR** Grenadier Guards move the Queen's Guard at Buckingham Palace, 11.30am, hand passed by the Grenadier Guards. **CHRISTMAS DAY** The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment moves the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am.

### Birthdays

**CHRISTMAS EVE** Mr Alistair Baillie, former diplomat, 64; Mrs Maïr Barnes, former managing director, Woolworths, 52; Mr John Barron, actor, 76; Professor Anthony Chan, psychiatrist, 54; Sir Colin Cowdrey, consultant, Barclays Bank, and former cricketer, 64; Sir Gerald Elliot, former chairman, Christian Salvesen, 78; Mr Jeremy Hindley, horse-racing trainer, 53; Mr James Hodge, Ambassador to Thailand, 54; Dame Joan Kelleher, former director, WRAC, 81; Sir Ivan Lawrence QC MP, 60; Dr John Marek MB, 56; Miss Suzy Menkes, fashion editor, *International Herald Tribune*, 53; Miss Thea Porter, fashion designer, 69; Mr Norman Rossington, actor, 68; Mr John D. Taylor MP, 59; Miss Carol Vorderman, broadcaster and writer, 36; Mr Philip Ziegler, author and editor, 67.

**CHRISTMAS DAY** Princess Alexandra, 60; Princess Alice, Duchess of Gloucester, 95; Lord Annan, author, 80; Miss Sheila Browne, former Principal, Newnham College, Cambridge, 72; Professor Sir Kenneth Calman, chief medical officer, Department of Health, 55; Mr Nick Cunniff, actor, 34; Mr Quentin Crisp, writer and performer, 88; Professor Christopher Frayling, Professor, Royal College of Art, 50; Lord Grade, chairman, the Grade Foundation, 72; The Right Rev Noel Jones, Bishop of Sodor and Man, 64; Miss Anne Lennon, singer, 42; Professor Philip Lowe, Vice-Chancellor, Liverpool University, 57; Mr Tony Martin, singer and actor, 83; Sir Peter Matthews, former Chief Constable of Surrey, 79; Mr Ismail Merchant, film producer, 68; Professor and Lord of Wills, Sir Noel Redding, rock musician, 51; Mr John Sharman, High Commissioner to the Seychelles, 59; Lord Sheppard of Dighegate, former chairman, Grand

Metropolitan, 64; Miss Slay Spack, actress, 47; Mr Nigel Stanner-Smith, sports commentator, 52; Sir Noel Stockdale, life president, ASDA group, 76; The Right Rev Benjamin Vaughan, former Bishop of Swansea and Brecon, 78; Sir Christopher Wailes, chief executive of Wales Building Group, 57.

### Anniversaries

**CHRISTMAS EVE** Births: St Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuits, 1491; William Warburton, bishop and scholar, 1698; James Prescott Joule, physicist, 1818; Matthew Arnold, poet and critic, 1822; Louis Journe, actor and director, 1887; Howard Robard Hughes, millionaire and recluse, 1905; Ava Lavinia Gardner (Lucy Johnson), actress, 1922. Deaths: Sir Thomas Beaufort, Duke of Exeter, admiral and commander, 1426; Vasco da Gama, explorer and navigator, 1524; William Makepeace Thackeray, novelist, 1863; Frank Richards (Charles Harold St John Hamilton), author and creator of "Billy Bunter", 1901; Peter Lawford, actor, 1984; John James Osborne, playwright and actor, 1994. On this day an attempt was made to assassinate Napoleon I, 1800; William Burke, body-snatcher, went on trial, 1828; part of the Capitol, Washington, and almost the whole Library of Congress was destroyed by fire, 1851; Giuseppe Verdi's opera, *Aida*, was performed for the first time, Cairo 1871; the Colosseum Theatre, London, opened, containing Britain's first revolving stage, 1904; General Eisenhower was appointed commander-in-chief of the Allied invasion forces, 1943; the *Apollo 8* spacecraft orbited the moon and sent back a Christmas message, 1968. Today is Christmas Eve and the Feast Day of St Adela, St Delphinus, St Gregory of Spoleto, St Irminda, St Sharbel Makhlouf and Saints Thersilla and Emfilana.

**CHRISTMAS DAY** Births: Sir Isaac Newton, mathematician, physicist and astronomer, 1642; William Collins, poet, 1721; Dorothy Wordsworth, writer, 1771; Clara (Clarissa) Harlowe Barron, founder of the American Red Cross, 1821; Charles Pathé, film pioneer, 1863; Mohammed Ali Jinnah, statesman, 1876; Maurice Utrillo, painter, 1883; Conrad Nicholson Hilton, hotel proprietor, 1887; Dame Rebecca West (Cecily Isabel Fielding), author, 1892; Humphrey DeForest Bogart, actor, 1899; Cabell (Cab) Calloway, jazz singer and band-leader, 1907; Anwar Sadat, statesman, 1918; Dennis Pope Adrian I, 1931; Sir Matthew Hale, Chief Justice and law reformer, 1676; W.C. Fields (William Claude Dukerfeld), comedian, 1946; Sir Charles Spencer Chaplin, comedian and film producer, 1879; Joan Miro, artist, 1893; Nicolas Cezanne, former Dominican president and his wife Elena, executed by firing squad 1989; Dean Martin (Dino Paul Crocetti), singer and actor, 1936. On this day: William I, "the Conqueror", was crowned in Westminster Abbey, 1066; Vasco da Gama sighted the African coastline of what is now Natal, 1487; the *Mayflower* arrived at Plymouth Rock, Massachusetts, 1620; the Great Frost of London began, when temperatures were 17 degrees below freezing, 1730; the first Christmas tree was put up at Queen's Lodge, Windsor, by Queen Charlotte, 1800; the Stone of Scone was stolen from Westminster Abbey, 1951; Václav Havel, playwright, was elected president of Czechoslovakia, 1989; in the Soviet Union, President Gorbachev announced that he had resigned all offices, and that the union was officially disbanded - it would be replaced by a Commonwealth of Independent States, 1991. Tomorrow is Christmas Day and the Feast Day of St Alburga, St Anastasia of Sinaitus, St Egeusia and The Martyrs of Nicomedia.

## Sex and the unique incarnation

### Meanings of Christmas

The Rev Dr Martyn Percy, Chaplain of Christ's College, Cambridge, starts our series of devotional pieces for Christmas with a reflection on the complications of the incarnation.

the claim as to who had the genuine foreknowledge of Jesus, following his circumcision (Luke 2:21). There was even devotion to this holy relic, and some mystics had experiences of and saw visions of its power. But nothing has survived to this century.

Theologically, this presents something of a challenge to the idea that Jesus was fully human and fully divine. How can you be a human person without having a human father? Surely flesh of our flesh, bone of our bone, is also DNA of our DNA? If Jesus does not have these human qualities, then how is salvation to be thought of? Gregory of Nazianzus (360 AD) said that "what was not assumed was not redeemed", arguing that if Jesus wasn't really human, we were not really saved.

Some modern theologians have attempted to side-step the issue. Even the most radical can usually assent to a statement like "God was in Christ". The prob-

lem is this: how much of him? Are we talking about a person uniquely imbued with divinity, infused with God as it were, a bit like a spice in a meal? Or another person who was a pre-existent being in the perfect communion of the Trinity, but who once learned carpentry skills?

No theological musings help the biological and genetic questions posed. But then, why should they? The early church didn't know anything about genes. It sought through its creeds, councils and controversies to safeguard unity, promote peace and snuff out heresy; and then to try and capture the mystery of the salvation wrought through the incarnation, in forms of words that did justice to a God that was sufficiently committed to humanity to become one of us. To live as a human, love like one, die as one, and yet not let that be the end of the story.

Heresy often seems to make more sense than orthodoxy - it is usually a reductive, comprehensible account of a mystery. Orthodoxy knows it cannot afford too much rationalism when it comes to the same, which is why it is so difficult to believe. But the struggle to think is always worth it, for without that, there can be no real living of the mystery. To follow Christ is to be caught up in ambiguity, to lose your certainty, to watch the light, but often in the dark.

So, there is no theological solution to the biological questions. We can't really know what went on between God, Mary, Joseph, and the sheels. All there can be is poetry, faith, hope and love. And the inadequate theological formulas that try to configure the amazing reality of the Christmas story - that he is, somehow, "Emmanuel", God, with us.

Dr V. J. 1520



# Beware of the anti-hunting roundheads in full cry

Tally ho! Hear those hunt sabs muttering: see those red coats fluttering. See the steam of hounds rising. Hark to the bark of Olde England saddled up. Yes, trussed up in hats and hair-nets, the fox-hunters are preparing for their annual, traditional Boxing Day meet. The Christmas ritual of chasing small wild animals across the countryside and screaming as dogs tear them to death is about to begin.

But this could be the last year for this risk-taking, fence-taking, life-taking sport. The aristocrats should be quaking in their riding boots: the roundheads are coming. The urban moralists of the New Model Labour Party have their hearts set on stopping the cavaliers in full charge.

Keen to clamp down on anti-social practices of all sorts, Labour plan to reduce the drink-driving limit, and warn us of the dangers of not sending our children to bed on time. And yesterday the party confirmed that it will hold a free vote on hunting if it is elected next year. Given the views of most Labour MPs, that probably means that a strong Labour victory would be followed in quick order by a ban on hunting. If there is an undercurrent of melancholy as the hip flasks are emptied, and the horns are prepared, it won't be surprising.

It is easy to understand where Labour are coming from. There is something revolting about the idea of

killing for pleasure. No matter how much the hunting lobby bray about the thrill of the chase and the skill of the riders, one simple fact remains: the end purpose of this sport is death. Killing for food, killing for protection, killing to manage the countryside; all these are essential and we shouldn't be squeamish about them. But the idea that people could be so proud of enjoying the kill is rather repellent.

Tradition is no defence. The fact that families have been playing such games for centuries doesn't justify their heirs continuing to hunt today. For centuries people have been doing all sorts of appalling things – including badger baiting, cockfighting and working ponies until they dropped – that we have now made illegal. Compassion about animals isn't a fad for flaky urbanites, nor is it simply squeamishness: it is a measure of a society becoming gentler and more civilised. This newspaper wouldn't hunt.

But would we therefore ban it? We would not: the prospect of the state intervening to ban an activity where the harm to others is not overwhelming, troubles us deeply.

For a start, the cruelty case against fox-hunting is not clear cut. Foxes are not as fluffy as they look. Basil Brush and Roald Dahl – author of the children's classic, *Fantastic Mr Fox* – may have helped the little vermin weave their way into our affections, but they

are predators which have been controlled for centuries by farmers and landowners, rich and poor. The anti-hunting lobby needs to make a more convincing case that other methods of slaughtering foxes are genuinely less cruel than hunting, before the arguments for a ban become overwhelming. We should reflect, too, on our own hypocrisy about animal welfare. Fox-hunting, most of us hate. But what about fishing? Anglers across the country clearly get great pleasure from their sport, although the purpose again is to maim or kill, sometimes without actually catching anything to eat. Sim-



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sake of a cheaper shopping trolley.

The truth is that we single out fox-hunting among all these animal welfare issues because we loathe the lifestyle and the traditions that go with it. Hunting remains the preserve of a tiny, predominantly wealthy, minority. At a time when the royals and their aristocratic entourage are more out of touch with the real world than ever, the majority of the population are impatient with their rituals, their power and their privileges. Prince Philip's clueless remarks about shooting and cricket bats only rammed home how detached they are. And stories of Prince William's enjoyment of stag hunting disappointed many, for they forced the country to recall that he wasn't simply another cherry, basketball-hatted youngster, he was one of them.

But none of this is really the point. Britain is full of people who do things others strongly disapprove of: pornographers and gas-guzzlers, boxing enthusiasts and stone-cladders, conceptual artists and sado-masochists, motocross manics and urban skateboarders. But before we leap in to call for a ban, we need to be absolutely sure that the offence is so great that the power of the state is needed, and that the curb on individual freedom is warranted. After a lot of thought, we decided that this case had been made for a handgun ban, after Dumblane. But the libertarian argument which lost that

one is not insignificant. We should be very careful, very edgy, about taking away the pleasures of minorities to save the conscience of the majority.

New Labour should concentrate on the harder, more important things: political reform, more efficient public services, fairer taxation. If its MPs want to take on the aristocracy, then let it be through the abolition of the House of Lords. The roundheads took too many liberties away – and what happened to them in the end?

## Let the tills ring out glad tidings

The decision by some supermarkets to open continuously till close of play today will be widely booed. It ought to be welcomed. It is a further experiment in the liberalisation of retailing hours in a country which has some way to go in matching consumer preference and supplier convenience. Most of us will forego the chance to buy baked beans – or the turkey – at 2am. But if there are enough late-working or insomniac shoppers to make it worthwhile for Tesco to stay open, no one should stop them. Provided the staff are paid fairly and the stores' neighbours are not disturbed let those with a passion for midnight encounters at the frozen food cabinet enjoy them.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Lack of vision beneath the 'dustbin lid'

Sir: Richard Rogers was unconvincing in his defence of what you call his Greenwich dustbin lid, 23 December, and did not sound convinced himself. He seems not really interested in the millennium event. His own agenda is his pet project for the Thames.

It is not that Lord Rogers's vision is wrong-headed. His idea for a "string of pearls", with the superb monuments of Parliament, St Paul's and the Tower strung along it, is beautiful. We should be trying to re-create the heavy Canaletto once painted, turning London's river once more into a rival of Venice or Dresden.

But his failure is no more than the failure which has characterised this fiasco since its inception. What is this Greenwich millennium monument going to be about? What ideal that we carry on into the next millennium will it seek to express? He has failed because we have not told him what we wanted.

Peter Popham condemns the autocratic hubris of many 20th-century architects, who thought that they could supply the spiritual vision and meaning lacking in their society. Such attempts never work: architects can only express for us a commonly held vision – consider the great medieval cathedrals, and the buildings of aristocratic 18th-century England.

We have got to work out those ideals for ourselves. We haven't yet even started to do so, and we have no idea what the millennium should be about. You have rightly called for such a debate to start. Throughout society our concern over our loss of direction and purpose is obvious and growing.

Perhaps Lord Rogers is right in saying that we can only plan a temporary exhibition for the year 2000, and the real building will be that which comes later. But that lasting monument, a complement to St Paul's, Banqueting House of Commons and Wren's Greenwich, is something we should all be thinking about and planning. Your most serious indictment of the Greenwich fiasco so far has been a lack of such public consultation. It is time for us all to think, and to speak out.

MICHAEL QUINN  
Reading, Berkshire

Sir: As the litany of the Millennium Commission's exhibition continues with its faltering progress ("Labour deals blow to millennium festival", 23 December), you reasonably ask for ideas (leading article, 13 December; letters, 18 December).

What better demonstration of time past, with Greenwich looking to the future, than to use the great historic buildings along the Thames as the exhibition, with Greenwich as the jewel in the crown?

The historic buildings are built. We have three years to make a living exhibition in each. The costs would be minimal compared with those mooted for the present ideas. The river would be brought to life; due to the spread of events the London transport system might just handle the millions of visitors foreseen, which with the present scheme it has little chance of doing; and we would leave behind some wonderful exhibitions which could continue. The interest of many other sponsors could be engaged.

Turning to Greenwich, this would become one part of a 20-mile exhibition, and thus could be made very much smaller. It should be about how we see a

sustainable future; it should demonstrate how we can harmonise the disparate aspects of our lives for our survival in the new century – resources, peoples, religions, science, medicine, architecture and art – and cannot rest on the spurious notion that we can buy ourselves out of our responsibility for long-term thinking with a trade fair. The greatest minds in this country and beyond should be invited to ponder this future and advise on a serious approach to these issues.

RICHARD BURTON  
Alfreds Burton and Koralek, Architects  
London NW1

Sir: I believe that the ill-fated millennium festival should be scrapped and replaced with a non-commercial, non-political, ever-green investment in this country. The "monument" I propose would be accessible to everyone, enhance the landscape and give this generation the opportunity to have a stake in our society.

I suggest that wasteland is reclaimed in each of the main regions of Great Britain – South-east, South-west, Midlands, North-east, North-west, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland – for the purpose of building a series of people's parks. The design of the parks would be co-ordinated professionally but based on ideas from the schoolchildren of that region.

The parks would provide not only a green and growing monument to the past, but also a signpost to the future.

KATE RUTHERFORD  
London N1

**Respectable folk failed rape victim**  
Sir: It is evident that oo good Samaritans drove by on the night of the rape in Watts Lane, Chislehurst ("Why good Samaritans drove by", 23 December).

Read once more the parable. There were two other characters in the plot, moreover two respectable characters, a priest and a Levite. The unpalatable fact is that these two people more nearly describe most of middle-class respectable Britain than does the Samaritan. Samaritans were despised by respectable Jews, who didn't consider there was anything "good" about them.

What the unfortunate victim needed was for a homeless, destitute asylum-seeker to pass by, not several hundred respectable people. Jesus understood the nature of the people to whom he spoke and after 2,000 years his biting condemnation still hits home.

Dr J P STEVENS  
London N19

**Anti-Tory tactics**  
Sir: Earl Russell must know perfectly well that the Liberal Democrats are not going to "come into power" at the next election whatever they promise (letter, 20 December).

Since they clearly are serious about constitutional reform they would do well to encourage tactical voting in every constituency where the two major opposition parties are simply cutting each other's throats. Targeted tactical voting could be a major factor in achieving an overwhelming Tory defeat and thus the removal of the largest obstacle to constitutional reform.

BRUCE KENT  
Co-Chair  
The Tactical Voting Campaign  
London N1



Christmas before television – The Illustrated London News, 1847

### Michael action weakens UN

Sir: There has been little media coverage of the British Government's recent announcement to withdraw, following the example of the United States, from the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (Unido).

It is quite unjustified. Unido has over recent years radically reformed itself on lines which Britain and other Western countries have urged. Its work in the field of developing country industrial sustainability is unique in the UN system.

Unido may or may not be abolished as part of a more sweeping UN reform process. But in the meanwhile any unilateral decisions on withdrawal from individual agencies encourage the unravelling of an already weakened UN system.

UN reform needs to be taken

seriously, and should be a foreign policy priority for the next government.  
JOHN GORDON  
Liberal Democrat Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for Don Valley  
London, N6  
The writer is a former member of the diplomatic service

Sir: In her article on the "weightless economy" (19 December), Diane Coyle referred to the estimate by the Bank for International Settlements that more than \$1,000bn worth of currencies were traded daily in 1995. To the extent that this trade is largely speculative dealings it is, like all gambling, a suitable target for taxation.

As Diane Coyle points out, these transactions cannot be ascribed to any particular country but take place in cyberspace. Any taxation would then have to be levied internationally and be universally accepted. The obvious body for this

is the United Nations – which could be authorised by an agreement of all the member states to impose a levy on all short-term currency transactions of a speculative nature.

Such a measure could provide the UN with an independent source of funds for its peace-keeping and other activities as well as providing a greater degree of stability for national currencies.

GEOFFREY GREENHALGH  
Crawley Down, Sussex

### Assessment-mad

Sir: You report ("Where the money goes", 19 December) that research is being done at Brunel on the university research assessment exercise. I suppose that the next research assessment will assess this research on research assessment. Is this what universities are for?

IAN ANDERSON  
Department of Mathematics  
University of Glasgow

### True to spirit of Reading Room

Sir: I should like to set the record straight concerning the future use of the Round Reading Room.

Marianne Macdonald ("The final chapter for library classic", 30 November) suggests that the room will "lose many original iron book stacks" and "be cut in half by a glass screen". As part of our scheme to open up Robert Smirke's magnificent inner courtyard, the book stacks surrounding the exterior of the Reading Room will be removed. These unseen stacks mostly date from the Thirties and Fifties; great care will be taken in removing the one original iron stack (which was altered in the Thirties) and preservation options examined.

Any adaptation of the Reading Room will be unobtrusive and sensitive to the architecture and furniture. We should certainly not support Malcolm Campbell's solution of taking the furniture out of the very room for which it was designed (letter, 19 December). Indeed, those who visit the Reading Room in the year 2000 will see the interior restored to its original decorative scheme of 1857, the walls lined with books from the Museum's own libraries.

Our plans have at no time included turning one of the finest examples of library architecture into "a shopping mall" or, as Tony Garrett remarks (letter, 4 December), "a computer café". As any current reader knows, the Reading Room already houses computer terminals and many readers use their own lap-tops.

After the departure of the British Library, the Reading Room will continue to be a place for serious study. Far from being party to the signing of the Reading Room's "death warrant", we believe that we have developed a valuable and sympathetic scheme for its future use.

R G W ANDERSON  
Director  
The British Museum  
London WC1

### Conflicting rules for blood donors

Sir: Every year we have appeals from the National Blood Transfusion Service for donors to give at Christmas, as supplies drop to very low levels. Yesterday, my wife and I attended a donor session for the South Thames Centre.

I normally give blood in London at the West End Donor Centre, run by the North Thames Centre, and had given blood there in September. They do not regard our April holiday in the Dominican Republic as a barrier to my donating. Recently, when I was called forward for the usual questions, I was asked if I had been abroad since I last gave blood. Answer: No. I then proceeded to give blood.

However, when my wife was called she referred to the April holiday, since it is over a year since she gave blood, and was told that she could not donate until a year had elapsed from the date of this holiday.

This morning I have checked with both blood centres. The north centre will and the south centre will not take blood. Indeed the south centre tells me that all centres will be following the rules they use and I too will be precluded from giving blood should we venture again to the more exotic shores for our holidays next year.

As long-haul destinations

### Sex 'norm' is just Western bias

Sir: Polly Toynbee's diatribe against Anne Atkins (9 December) reveals far more about her own rather narrow, monocultural world-view than it does about Anne Atkins.

"In the real world," Ms Toynbee pontificates, "sex before marriage is the norm; and the idea of being locked in indissoluble marriage with someone you never had sex with is grotesque." Oh really? Says who? As one who has spent the majority of my working life in the countries of South Asia, perhaps I may gently remind Ms Toynbee that, for countless millions in the world today, such a practice is still the cultural and religious norm.

I and my Egyptian relatives, my Nepali, Indian and Afghan friends, not to mention many British friends (of Asian ethnic origin and/or Christian convictions), find it patronising in the extreme to be told, by implication, that we do not inhabit "the real world" or that our cultural and religious norms are "grotesque", simply because they fail to conform to Ms Toynbee's superior and ethnocentric cultural perspectives.

G K WARDELL  
Kathmandu, Nepal

### Be fair to the Freemasons

Sir: May I correct some statements in the article "Masons linked to bullion heist" (19 December)? Kenneth Noye, who was involved in the Brinks-Mat bullion robbery, was expelled from Freemasonry in 1989. No one else involved in this robbery was a Freemason. The Grand Lodge of Scotland has repeatedly denied that Thomas Hamilton was a Freemason.

There are no Lodges in the House of Commons. There are two Lodges primarily, but not exclusively, for MPs or people who work in and for Parliament, but they meet at Freemasons' Hall. One of them, New Welcome, was founded in 1929 partly because it was felt that the Labour MPs of the day might appreciate the chance of becoming Freemasons in a London Lodge.

It is ironic that some of their successors feel that they may be deselected if they are Freemasons, because their constituents misunderstand Freemasonry and do not care to be told anything good about it.

M B S HIGHAM  
Grand Secretary  
United Grand Lodge of England  
London WC2

### Marilyn's size

Sir: I am sorry to disappoint Dr David Ashton but Marilyn Monroe was not "voluptuous" (Letters, 20 December). He appears to have accepted the myth, as did *The Independent* in its feature on 16 December that Monroe was a size 16. Monroe had the gloriously thin figure of 35-22-35. Can the "circumferentially challenged" now stop hiding behind this myth?

STEPHEN DORRILL  
Holmfirth,  
West Yorkshire







# Do we do Christmas right?

Whether you're an atheist or an adiphorist, an agnostic or an apathetic Christian, Sara Maitland wishes you a guilt-free holiday feast

Last week someone showed me a Christmas card - it had been designed in the Far East but is for sale here. It depicts a traditional nativity scene in the foreground; shepherds, kings, lovely maiden and neo-natal child. In the background, high on a snow-covered hillside, was Father Christmas, white beard, red coat and all, hanging on a crucifix. It was quite pretty, very Christmassy. I bet it sold well too.

Ho, ho, ho. Or something like that.

It seemed somehow an icon of our time. Christmas has, over the last century or two, become the major folk festival of Europe. Even Scotland, which for a long time hung onto Hogmanay as its mid-winter celebration - oddly enough as a form of Christian (Presbyterian) resistance to Christmas (Roman Catholics) ritualism - has given in. Boxing Day may still not be a Bank holiday in Scotland but public Christmas trees, shopping centre Santas and carol services have all crept into common culture.

Perhaps it is not surprising, then, that like other older folk customs, Christmas is absorbing and integrating diverse elements and processing them quite quickly into the "tradition". Turkeys, Father Christmas and robins, for example, have absolutely nothing to do with first century Bethlehem.

Like any other well-established living myth, it is extremely difficult to decode Christmas honestly - no one really wants to say that they are living by explained away. In a deafening chorus of angels and cash tills, one might not notice that there are at least five very different groups (all of which cut across other boundaries such as class or ethnicity) celebrating or enduring Christmas this week. The Holy or Unholy Five are: (1) the believing Christians; (2) the "lapsed", or cultural, Christians; (3) the uninterested, called Adiphorists; (4) the rigorous atheists; and (5) the members of other religions. It is not easy for any of us.

Perhaps it is easy for the rigorous atheist, or at least for those of them with enough money to leave a cold Britain for the beaches of warmer, non-European, non-Christian countries. Though even then they may have to be careful or they might find their hotel dimer festooned with a kindly meant tinsel strip. If they aren't rich enough to get away, their only hope is to buy in an enormous quantity of food sometime in mid-October (the last chance to escape canned carol music, special Xmas offers and plastic bags printed with seasonal greetings.) With a bit of luck and careful planning they may be able

to watch a number of TV movies which, despite their ambience of sentimental nostalgia, do not actually mention Christmas.

They will, however, have to lock themselves in their houses for several days or face the irritating good cheer of their neighbours. And even this will only work if they do not have any children; children can be trained in parental firmness, but this tends to break down both under peer group pressure and within a quarter-mile radius of any sweet or toy shop.

So, unless you are rich and child-free, it is probably best to be a well intentioned Adiphorist. An Adiphorist is one who is indifferent to all matters of religion. While theists and deists believe in God, and atheists believe in not-God, and agnostics cannot decide which they believe in, Adiphorists simply do not care. This useful word deserves to be better known: lots and lots of people are Adiphorists nowadays. Adiphorism is probably the fastest growing theological position in the country. A cheerful Adiphorist can take whatever pleasures them from the collection of customs and rituals of Christmas without a moments' worry. They can enjoy Renaissance Madonnas and the sweetness of treble voiced choirs as pure art. Or they can get indecently drunk, wear a silly paper hat, make sexual advances to unsuitable colleagues at the office party and wake up with a blinding headache - and all this, quite free from any obligation to wonder whether they have somehow missed the true spirit of Christmas.

They will pay a small price for this freedom in the disapproval of a few of their neighbours, and of the tabloid papers who shift at this time of year to a highly moralistic criticism of such people who are "spoiling" Christmas for the rest of us. They may pay a higher price in terms of a sort of loss of magical joy or self-righteousness; but of course they do not really care about that.

Meanwhile the cultural or lapsed Christians - many of whom are actually Adiphorists, but who are too sentimental to have noticed - really love Christmas. They get an aesthetic and emotional buzz off it. They even go to Midnight Mass and shed a tear during the second verse of *Oh Little Town of Bethlehem*. It gives them a fabulous nostalgia for their own childhood and they honestly believe they are doing it all for the children. They feel happy and smug. The only price they have to pay is a tiny nagging guilt about feeling quite so good from something that they totally ignore for the other 51 weeks of the year. If they have a happy time this week, then



From dawn to dusk Christmas means shopping amidst a deafening chorus of cash tills

next week they may well be making New Year resolutions about going to church more often, giving more to charity or having their horrendous mother-in-laws for Christmas next year. Luckily, by mid-January they will have recalled that the Salvation Army uses its Christmas collection to maintain its own brass bands, or that Mother Theresa isn't quite all she's cracked up to be. In fact, it is the hypocrisy of the churches that is keeping them from their darling baby Jesus. By Good

Friday they will certainly have recovered.

It must genuinely be very difficult for committed members of other religions, particularly those who may not or cannot believe in the liberal notion that God is just God by various other names (those members of religions that are in this respect at least like Christianity), to find an attitude to Christmas that is both charitable and honourable. There is no doubt a wide range of solutions, depending on the size and accessibility of their own religious communities, their relations with their neighbours, and the rigour of their discipline. But, without question, serious members of other faiths (and here I would include humanists, Marxist-materialists, and eco-spiritualists, among other secular disciplines) have the most theologically challenging Christmas. On the whole most manage a public face of benign indifference, or an amused tolerance that should be a lesson to us all.

What is sad is that if we lived in a genuinely, culturally open society this burden would be lifted from them. At least the Adiphorists and many of the cultural Christians, promoters of both hedonism and spiritual uplift, could share many aspects of their religious celebrations. But while one minority religion dominates the cultural high ground is not likely to happen. The real fly in this sweet ointment, sadly enough, is we believing Christians. Despite the fact that we actually stole Christmas from the pre-Christian winter solstice celebrations of northern Europe, and co-opted it to our own ends, we now act as though we owned it. We show every intention of hanging on to it too, by almost any means we can think of. And we do not seem to want anyone else to enjoy it. Only Christians, we appear to say, can dictate the "true meaning" of Christmas - and our Christmas means too often that you cannot do what you want.

As a Christian, I believe that a unique and significant event occurred which, for complex and social but totally unhistorical reasons, we especially celebrate in late December. This belief certainly lays obligations on me: obligations mainly of praise and thanksgiving. How these obligations can possibly be undermined by people having a good time in their own way is most mysterious. But most of the news and pulpit, and a preposterous amount of the media at this time of year, are dedicated to the peculiar notion that it is somehow good for people to act as though they believe something that they don't believe. Before they have earned the right to pull a single cracker, let alone consume an alcoholic drink, they must pass a spirituality test that will certainly include repentance for any material pleasure they are hoping to enjoy.

What is odd about this attitude is that it is not Christian. Christians believe that what happened at Christmas was profoundly materialistic. God loved the world so much that the barrier between matter and spirit was broken by God becoming matter, not by us becoming spirit. And further more this did not happen just to a group of well-trained, biblically-sound Christians but to and for everyone.

The materialistic delight of non-believers, the sentimental aesthetics of half-believers, even the withdrawal of non-Christians are all perfectly appropriate responses - and often much more fun. But we Christians just feel hurt when people can't see it the way we do. Still, hurt feelings do not justify our insistence on flexing our cultural muscle.

There is a way out of this confusion. Perhaps all of Britain, should take a leaf from Scottish history and hold out for Hogmanay: a genuinely inclusive feast of hope at the turning of a new year. Nothing in this would stop Christians, a week earlier, having the most rigorously pious religious celebrations, which would inconvenience no one else and please at least some of us. It would be a massive step towards real tolerance and a multi-faith society, and it would even be more Christian.

But if God had wanted to forgive us for our ancestors' and our descendants' sins, why didn't He just go right ahead and forgive us - or them? What's the beatings and the crucifixion? I guess He just loves capital punishment, huh? That's quite some role model you've got there.

Surely, you must be joking

What's that you say? They believe what? They believe God sent His only son to be born on Earth so that He could grow up to be tortured and executed? You must mean that as it turned out He was executed, but surely... Come on! ... you're telling me He was tortured and executed because that was the whole point of His being born in the first place? Oh, OK, have it your own way, but why did God want His son to be tortured? As a punishment for His sins? Huh. These must have been quite some sins. I'll say! What's that again? As a punishment for somebody else's sins? You're joking, of course. No? Well, whose sins was He being punished for? Adam's. Who's Adam? Adam didn't really exist? You're telling me God deliberately had His only beloved son tortured to death as a punishment for the sins of a man who never even existed? Whw, that's quite some God you've got there. I mean, didn't He ever hear of the laws of evidence?

Well, anyway, what were these sins that Adam, who never existed, was supposed to have committed? There was only one sin? Well, let's hear it then. What was the charge? This had better be good. Don't tell me, let me guess. He was caught scrumping apples.

Oh my, this I cannot bear. You are not serious! He was caught scrumping apples? Only one apple? And that was it. Well I'll be damned. What was that again? It may not even have been an apple, it is just described as a fruit? Well I guess it didn't really exist either, so it doesn't matter what kind of fruit it wasn't.

Run that by me again. Yeah. Yeah, OK, that sounds a bit less gross - it wasn't really Adam's sin; that's just a metaphor for all the sins of all mankind. Fine, fine. I suppose next you're going to tell me that includes those sins that hadn't yet been committed. Oh, it does? Yes, I reckon by now I should have expected that.

But if God had wanted to forgive us for our ancestors' and our descendants' sins, why didn't He just go right ahead and forgive us - or them? What's the beatings and the crucifixion? I guess He just loves capital punishment, huh? That's quite some role model you've got there.

Richard Dawkins

## David Trimble's curious alliance

Donald Macintyre considers the real reasons for the Ulster Unionist deal with Sir James Goldsmith

Everything David Trimble does in these uncertain times is larger than life, magnified and scrutinised for its electoral meaning. The Ulster Unionist leader's potential to decide the election date by bringing the Government down in a confidence vote sees to that. So what is it, this bizarre link between Trimble and the international capitalist Sir James Goldsmith? Trimble has decided to allow his solitary MEP, Jim Nicholson, to join Sir James's Europe of Nations group in the European Parliament in return for an estimated £200,000 increase in Unionist campaign funds. The decision has infuriated his deputy, John Taylor, split his party, annoyed the Conservatives, and triggered all sorts of speculation about what Trimble himself is up to.

Since his grip on his party in the House of Commons is scarcely tighter than John Major's on the Conservatives, it looks a little reckless. But given Trimble's pivotal role in the British Parliament over the next few months, it poses an immediate question: is this the beginning of a realignment on the British right, or just a cynical and mercenary quick fix? Or both?

It's quite a big moment: it appears to sever the increasingly frayed cord which has linked Conservatism and Unionism since the last century. It's impossible to imagine Trimble's predecessor, the old-school Sir James Moynihan, playing fast and loose with the Tories like this.

Two big changes have been visible



James Goldsmith snares a new disciple

Photomontage by Julian Saul

in the Tory party itself since 1979. One is obvious: that under John Major the Government has moved from prescriptive Unionism to one of theoretical neutrality over the Union. Underpinned by the principle that the future of the province should be whatever its people wanted it to be, it was this neutrality that was expressed by successive Northern Ireland secretaries, who said that London had no selfish strategic or economic interest in holding on to Northern Ireland. And this shift went largely unchallenged in the Tory party, because of the second, less obvious, change: that the intellectual leadership of Unionism within the party had begun to dissolve, at least in the House of Commons.

There is no longer an Airey Neave, or an Enoch Powell, or a John Biggs Davidson or an Ian Gow to provide that leadership. By demonstrating, albeit provocatively, that the Ulster Unionists are no longer blood brothers of the Conservatives, Trimble can argue that he is doing little more

than holding a mirror to the Tories. That isn't to deny the strong whiff of short-term expediency about the Goldsmith deal for both parties. Sir James and his allies have been hunting for months for the single MEP for whom they would take their numbers in the European Parliament from 17 to 18, thus qualifying it as a formal grouping and making it eligible for funds and to serve on key committees. The transfer gives Nicholson and Goldsmith more influence in the European Parliament. And by agreeing to pursue Sir James's Euro-referendum proposal in their general-election campaign, the Unionists benefit directly up to polling day. Two hundred thousand pounds is quite a lot of money in Northern Ireland politics. The move was strongly opposed by both Ken Maginnis, a UUP vice-president and the party's security spokesman, who is on the more liberal wing of the party, and by John Taylor, Trimble's deputy. It's true that Mr Taylor's outrage is somewhat undermined by the fact that as

Mr Nicholson's predecessor in the 1980s, he himself transferred from the mainstream European Democratic Group to the extreme-right grouping led by Jean-Marie Le Pen. And their claim that the move could cost them possible general election gains in East Belfast and North Down is doubtful. The critics nevertheless have a powerful argument: that just at the moment when the party is trying to prove its modernity, it has linked up with one of the more eccentric groups in European politics. Some close to Trimble insist that his Euro-scepticism (he will be a sponsor of Teresa Gorman's new-year bill calling for a referendum) is a vote-winner because of protestant suspicion of the EU in Northern Ireland. More impartial observers doubt this. For a start, the Unionist orthodoxy that Northern Ireland voted against joining the EEC in 1975 is really a myth: it's true that fewer voted to join in Northern Ireland than elsewhere in the UK, but there was still a 52 per cent majority

in favour, and there are signs that hostility to the EU has if anything melted. So it still looks as though cash is the main tangible benefit.

But something else has annoyed Trimble's critics even more. There is a strong suspicion that David Burnside, lobbyist and close ally of Trimble, played a key role in sealing the match. Burnside refused to comment yesterday, but he has excellent contacts among the circle of right-wing Tories and former Tories who sympathise with Sir James. The only prominent member of this group actually to join Goldsmith is Lord McAlpine. But there are plenty of Thatcherite Tories - including some of those MPs in seats where Sir James has said he will not field candidates - who agree with his vision of a "renegotiated" relationship with Europe. And this may help to explain the symbolism of the move Trimble has made. For the UUP leader is almost certainly considering life after as well as before the election.

Trimble is probably genuine in saying that the move will not give Sir James direct leverage at Westminster over the next few months. The ferocity of the reaction among his own MPs suggests that Sir James wouldn't be able to call their tune anyway. Unionist supporters of the deal maintain that they have paid a low price for installing a little fear into the Government. Trimble's own hopes of the election outcome are no doubt complex, but the best prospect for him is probably a Labour government with a narrow majority which has to take the Unionists into account; and a Tory opposition which quickly transforms itself back into a full-blooded Unionist party under a new, right-of-centre leadership. Under those circumstances the rupture with Conservatism might be reversible. Trimble may have damaged his own standing with those Unionist MPs who rightly believe that to deal with Sir James it helps to have a long spoon. His judgement has been doubtful. But by flirting with Goldsmith, Trimble has sent out a clear message about the kind of Tory party he hopes for when the election is over.

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# business & city

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BUSINESS & CITY EDITOR: JEREMY WARNER

## Pru ups stakes in battle for Northern

Chris Godsmark  
Business Correspondent

Northern Electric's increasingly chaotic battle against a £78.2m hostile takeover bid took another unexpected twist yesterday when its biggest shareholder, the Prudential, offered to buy shares in the company if other fund managers who had previously accepted offer from US power generator CalEnergy changed their minds.

Last night at least one investor, the US bank Salomon Brothers, was believed to have sold its stake to Prudential while another, Goldman Sachs, had been approached. Because the result of the bid was so close, even small purchases of shares by the Prudential could swing the result back to the Northern management.

A Prudential spokesman declined to comment on the development, apart from reiterating its opinion that the

650p a share offer was too cheap. However a senior Prudential source confirmed that it was seeking to buy more Northern shares. He said the Prudential would buy the shares "if some stock was offered to us." He continued: "It's cheap at the price."

Rival fund managers were astonished by the news. One said: "This is a bit racy for the Pru. It is quite an unusual stance for them to take."

Though Northern Electric shares were suspended yesterday at 64.1p pending appeals to the Takeover Panel, the Prudential was buying them "off market" by approaching willing sellers. The results of its buying spree are likely to be made public to the Stock Exchange today.

The move by the Prudential, which already owns 11.35 per cent of Northern and has remained staunchly loyal to the existing management throughout, was widely interpreted as

a much-needed boost for the company.

Last night the result of the bid continued to hang on a knife-edge as David Morris, Northern's chairman, mounted a desperate last-ditch appeal against last week's ruling by the Panel's Executive, which effectively holds the outcome of the offer in its hands.

CalEnergy said it spoke for 50.13 per cent of Northern's shares, just enough to give it control, but only if acceptances received after the original Friday deadline were taken into account.

If the Panel decided to reverse its ruling and back the original Friday deadline, CalEnergy would have narrowly lost the contest, with 49.77 per cent of the shares.

However if the Panel endorses its decision and allows late acceptances to be included, Northern's only chance to fight off the attack would be to persuade investors to switch back

to existing management. Northern's broker, BZW, has already been barred from buying more of the company's shares by the Takeover Panel.

In another development both Northern and BZW could face disciplinary action after the Panel, which polices bids, announced that it was to investigate the circumstances surrounding the disclosure of a controversial £250,000 "performance" fee granted by Northern to its brokers, BZW.

It has emerged that Northern agreed to pay the fee last Thursday, the day after BZW bought 2.3 per cent of the company's shares in an attempt to breathe new life into the bid defence.

The share purchases were only approved by the Takeover Panel on Wednesday after BZW assured the Executive that there was no special fee arrangement involved.

The Panel's investigation will focus on why BZW did not

disclose the £250,000 "performance" fee until Friday morning, hours before the offer was due to close.

In a statement the Panel said it would "investigate the circumstances in which information was received from BZW, possibly having a bearing on certain purchases of Northern shares.... Following the investigation, the Executive will consider what, if any, further action is appropriate."

However, sources suggested the investigation was likely to be separate from Northern's appeal against the extension.

Meanwhile, speculation mounted that other City bodies could be dragged into the row. Richard Farrant, chief executive of the Securities and Futures Authority, the City watchdog, said that if the Takeover Panel regarded the deal as having breached its rules it could be referred for investigation to the SFA.

Comment, page 13

### Key players in the takeover drama

**David Morris**, chairman, Northern Electric: Aged 62. Joined as chairman before privatisation in 1989. Architect of the infamous "scorched earth" defence of the Trafalgar House bid, offering £560m of giveaways to shareholders.

The only electricity chief to successfully fight off a hostile bid. His pay has doubled since the flotation in 1990 to £296,000 last year.

**David Sokol**, chairman, CalEnergy: Aged 40. Trained as an electrical engineer before starting his own business developing independent power projects.

His alliance with Peter Kiewit, a large private US construction group, led to the rapid growth of CalEnergy to sales of \$398m last year. Apart

from a liking for Rolex watches, Mr Sokol's character appears unblemished. Married his high-school sweetheart. Lives in Omaha, Nebraska. A committed Christian.

**Simon de Zoete**, chairman, BZW equities division: Joined de Zoete & Bevan in 1966, rising to chairman. In overall charge of Northern Electric's broking account. Member of one of the City's oldest broking dynasties.

Advised to many major US groups, including GEC, ICI and BAT. Played a leading role in Granada bid for Forte.

**Derek Higgs**, chief executive, Prudential fund management division: Northern's biggest shareholder and Mr Morris's staunch supporter. Until last February he was

managing director of corporate finance for investment bankers SG Warburg, which advised Northern during its acrimonious defence of the Trafalgar House takeover bid.

He was seen as an unlikely appointment at the Prudential by insiders, having no prior background in fund management.

**Alistair Defriez**, director general of the Takeover Panel: Joined the panel in February from SG Warburg, where he worked with Mr Higgs, leading Northern's defence of the Trafalgar bid.

At the time he complained to the panel over a controversial share deal by Trafalgar advisers, Swiss Bank Corporation. Like Mr Higgs, Mr Defriez left Warburg after the SBC takeover in 1995.

## Interest rates may rise as housing market firms

Peter Rodgers  
Financial Editor

The threat of further interest rate rises before the election was reinforced yesterday by minutes of the monthly meeting in October between the Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, and Eddie George, governor of the Bank of England.

Mr George told Mr Clarke that the 0.25 percentage point rise which they both agreed to implement immediately on 30 October, to the surprise of the City, might have to be followed up with further increases to keep inflation under control.

The governor said that the quarter point "might well not be enough to moderate the upswing sufficiently to restore a better-than-even chance of achieving the inflation target over the next two years."

Mr George's warning came as renewed predictions of a strong improvement in the housing market were published by Ox-

ford Economic Forecasting, which expected that house price inflation of 7 per cent a year could bring a sharp increase in house sales in the near future.

Building societies have been predicting a sustained recovery in prices, and economists have forecasted rises of up to 10 per cent a year over the next few years. But the key piece of evidence needed to show that the recovery is strong and sustained is a move to much higher turnover in the housing market, which has not yet materialised.

Turnover has been rising at about the same rate as prices, up 7 per cent on a year ago, but from a very low base of around 1.2 million transactions a year.

However, the Oxford Institute said transactions could rise "fairly rapidly in the near future" to around 2 million at the end of the decade, not far short of the previous peak.

According to the minutes of the October meeting, the Chancellor said he "certainly did not

want activity in the housing market to get out of hand and would watch it closely". Activity was picking up but sales of houses in London were distorting the overall picture, which remained patchy, he said. Demand was high and supply was restricted as homeowners kept their houses off the market in expectation of further increases.

Mr George said recent evidence showed overall inflation was less likely to be below the 2.5 per cent target "for any length of time in the short run". The Government has a medium-term target of 2.5 per cent for underlying inflation, which has been stuck at 3.3 per cent year-on-year for the past two months.

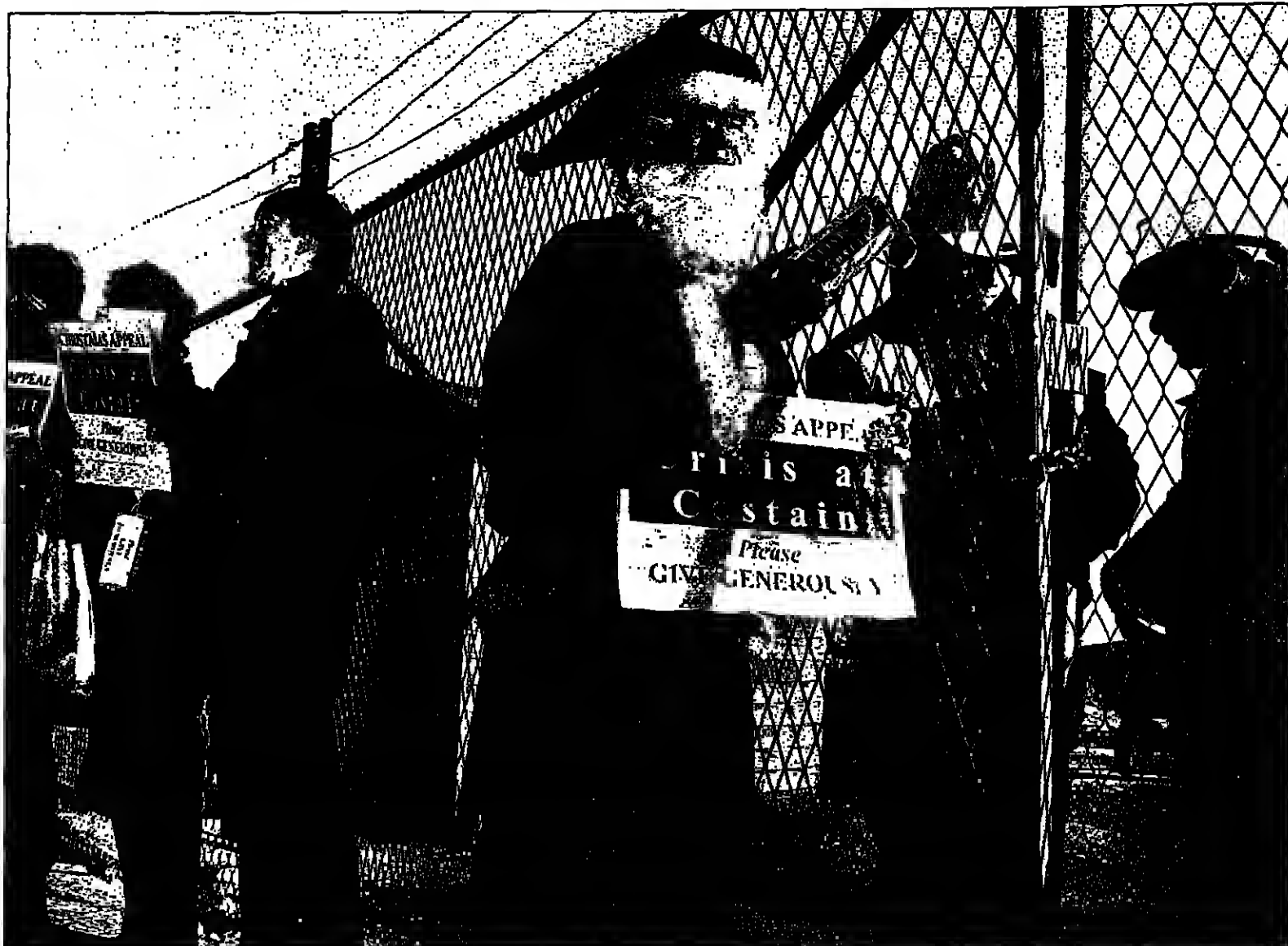
In an apparent reference to the political pressure to keep rates down ahead of the election, Mr George said "given present expectations about the constraints on policy, a quarter per cent move now could have a relatively strong signal effect on the credibility of policy".

That would reduce the size and speed of the rise in rates that might eventually be necessary to make the inflation target secure and sustain the economic expansion.

Explaining the background to his recommendation of the October increase, Mr George said the need for tightening was urgent because output was growing above trend and the expected fall in price inflation had failed to happen.

Comment, page 13

### Santa shakes it up in Newbury as attention is drawn to plight of Costain employees



Season of goodwill: Costain Independent Shareholders' Association yesterday launched a Christmas appeal for the welfare of staff and subcontractors of the troubled construction group. Carols were sung as Father Christmas shook a collecting tin outside a compound on the route of the controversial Newbury by-pass, where Costain is

the main contractor. The action group was drawing attention to Costain's dire financial position.

"We decided to sing carols and collect on the site of the Newbury by-pass since this is deemed to be Costain's greatest liability," said Andrew Wood, CISA's secretary. "Our appeal is for Costain's unfortunate employees and subcontractors who stand to lose most if Costain goes into receivership."

Two weeks ago Costain announced the resignation of its chief executive, Alan Lovell, issued a profits warning, gave details of yet another share issue and announced the sale of its US coal business for far less than had been expected. Environmental

protesters plan to turn up at two shareholders' meetings called by Costain. On Friday investors will vote on the coal disposal, while on 6 January they will consider Costain's breach of the Companies Act now that its net assets have fallen below half of the company's called-up share capital.

Photograph: John Lawrence

## RJB seeks share buyback

Tom Stevenson  
City Editor

RJB Mining is calling an extraordinary meeting next month to gain shareholder approval to buy in a further 5 per cent of its shares. The company denied the move was an attempt to underpin its share price which collapsed two weeks ago following an unexpected profit forecast downgrade by the rival miner's own broker, BZW.

Gordon McPhie, finance director, said the proposed buyback would enhance earnings per share by about 2 per cent at the current share price. He said the move, which follows a

purchase by the company of 10 per cent of its shares in July, was unrelated to the plunge in the share price, which at one point sent the shares as low as 37.5p, compared with a high for the year of 62.5p and yesterday's close of 43.9p.

NSM, the heavily indebted coal miner, said its shares had been temporarily suspended yesterday pending details of the proposed sale of its Cleef Hill plant hire subsidiary, other planned disposals and further information on its ongoing discussions with its banks.

NSM said it had now completed the disposal of Cleef Hill Plant in a deal which would reduce its debts by about £5m. It said a number of other "significant disposals" were in train.

The shares were suspended at 8p after NSM said it believed it was not possible to maintain an orderly market in the company's shares without full information on the disposals and the bank discussions, both of which were still progressing.

The sharp fall is understood to have driven a wedge between BZW and a number of institutions which are unhappy at the way the broker encouraged them to invest in RJB in 1994 when it acquired most of British Coal's assets only to cut its profit fore-

casts to bring them back into line with the rest of the market.

Two weeks ago, Alan Richards, who was ranked top of Reuters' 1996 survey of extractive industries analysts, reduced his forecast for 1997 from £196m to £185m and for 1998 from £232m to £192m.

Some analysts believe RJB faces serious problems once fixed-price contracts set up by the Government prior to the sale of the power generators run out in April 1998.

It is understood the company is struggling to persuade those generators to sign up to contracts after that date at a satisfactory price.

## Deutsche Bank loses top rating

Jill Treanor  
Banking Correspondent

Deutsche Bank was demoted from the elite club of triple-A rated banks yesterday, heaping further embarrassment on the German banking giant in the wake of the Morgan Grenfell Asset Management scandal.

The move by Moody's, the New York credit rating agency, means that only a handful of banks are still ranked in the financial world's premier league of creditworthiness and two of them - Union Bank of Switzerland and Dresdner Bank - are under review for a downgrade.

Analysts in London said the

Deutsche downgrade was a fitting end to a dreadful year for the bank.

Deutsche will end up with a hill for more than £400m for the fiasco at Morgan Grenfell where Peter Young, a former star fund manager, broke rules laid down by City regulators.

Mr Young, under investigation by the Serious Fraud Office, set up a web of Luxembourg holding companies to hide the extent of his investments in high technology stocks. Deutsche is compensating 90,000 investors in three affected funds.

Moody's cut Deutsche's long-term debt, counterparty and de-

posit ratings from triple A to Aa1.

The agency confirmed the bank's Prime-1 rating for short-term deposits and commercial paper but cut the long-term rating and counterparty rating of Morgan Grenfell & Co to Aa2 from Aa1.

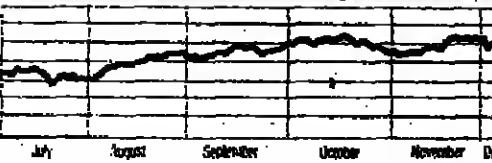
Deutsche played down the significance of the downgrade. "We are convinced that the new evaluation will not lead to a lasting rise in refinancing costs," said a spokesman.

But the bank's shares slipped in the last few minutes of trade on the Frankfurt stock exchange to close at DM70.59, down DM0.56.

Linda Montag, senior analyst at Moody's, said the Morgan Grenfell scandal was not the direct reason for the downgrade.

"But [it's] one of the examples of the risks of the bank's global expansion," she said. "The changing dynamics of Germany's fragmented banking market and fierce competition in global markets in which the bank was expanding, such as investment banking, added uncertainty to the bank's fundamentals, Ms Montag said."

However, Moody's still believes Deutsche is "one of the world's strongest and better managed financial institutions".

STOCK MARKETS									
FTSE 100									
									
Indices									
Index	Close	Week's chg	Change%	1996 High	1996 Low	Yield%	FTSE 100 Real-time Data		
FTSE 100	4077.60	+105.2	+2.6	4077.60	3632.30	3.91			
FTSE 250	4448.40	+90.1	+2.1	4568.60	4015.30	3.56			
FTSE 350	2023.70	+49.8	+2.5	2023.70	1816.60	3.83			
FTSE SmallCap	2198.60	+30.2	+1.4	2241.36	1954.06	3.19			
FTSE All-Share	1993.71	+47.5	+2.4	1994.54	1791.95	3.79			
New York	6484.40	+179.5	+2.8	6547.79	5032.94	2.09			
Tokyo	7969.46	-659.9	-8.2	22666.80	19570.67	0.811			
Hong Kong	13131.41	+347.3	+2.7	13930.95	10294.87	3.221			
Frankfurt	2854.45	+54.7	+2.0	2909.91	2263.36	1.631			
Statistics as of 23 December									

INTEREST RATES									
UK interest rates									
Index	1 Month	3 Month	6 Month	1 Year	2 Year	3 Year	5 Year	10 Year	30 Year
UK	6.06	6.94	7.59	7.53	7.87	7.68			
US	5.84	5.73	6.34	5.73	6.59	6.08			
Japan	0.19	0.43	2.36	1.62					
Germany	3.25	3.18	5.83	6.10	6.73	6.87			
BOND YIELDS									
Index	1 Month	3 Month	6 Month	1 Year	2 Year	3 Year	5 Year	10 Year	30 Year
UK	6.06	6.94	7.59	7.53	7.87	7.68			
US	5.84	5.73	6.34	5.73	6.59	6.08			
Japan	0.19	0.43	2.36	1.62					
Germany	3.25	3.18	5.83	6.10	6.73	6.87			
MAIN PRICE CHANGES									
Index	1 Month	3 Month	6 Month	1 Year	2 Year	3 Year	5 Year	10 Year	30 Year
Bm Barren Pts	742.5	87	13.3	13.3	13.3	13.3	13.3	13.3	13.3
Barren Pts	636.5	85	11.4	11.4	11.4	11.4	11.4	11.4	11.4
Gen Accord	760	72	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5

CURRENCIES									
£/\$									
Index	Close	Week's chg	1 Y Ago	5 Y Ago	10 Y Ago	20 Y Ago	30 Y Ago	40 Y Ago	50 Y Ago
\$ (London)	1.5557	+0.056	1.5415						
\$ (New York)	1.5720	+0.156	1.5430						
DM (London)	2.5899	+2.559	2.2200						
¥ (London)	190.287	+1.845	198.004						
¥ Index	94.1	+0.9	83.0						
OTHER INDICATORS									
Index	Close	Week's chg	1 Y Ago	5 Y Ago	10 Y Ago	20 Y Ago	30 Y Ago	40 Y Ago	50 Y Ago
Oil Brent \$	23.84	+0.15	17.82						
Gold \$	369.15	-0.05	387.40						
Gold £	221.49	-0.59	231.64						
Base Rates									
UK	6.06								
US	5.84								
Japan	0.19								
Germany	3.25								

## Shares row clouds Norwich flotation

Jill Treanor  
and Nic Cicutti

The planned £4.5bn stock market flotation of Norwich Union, the insurer, was mired in controversy yesterday as it emerged that many thousands of members in line for a free shares bonanza worth at least £500 each may have been fraudulently recruited. Norwich Union yesterday said that it had yet to take disciplinary action against any of its staff for encouraging the sale and fraudulent backdating of insurance policies.

Its denials came amid allegations that at least one of its UK offices had written to independent financial advisers encouraging them to sign up new members and send them in under its controversial "pipeline" rule.

It also came as the Personal Investment Authority, the financial regulator, said it was investigating a number of alleged fraudulent "pipeline" applications. It would not confirm that among its members under investigation is NatWest UK. NatWest confirmed it has suspended 18 of its staff for allegedly backdating policy applications.

20/12/96

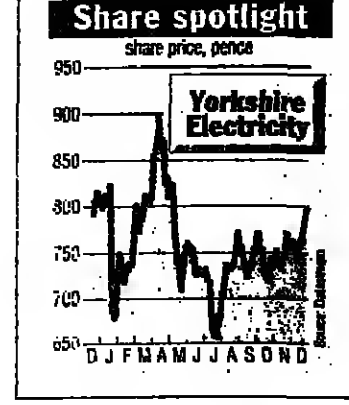






# market report / shares

Data Bank		
FTSE 100	4087.2	+9.6
FTSE 250	4454.6	+6.2
FTSE 350	2028.1	+4.4
SEAQ VOLUME	553.3m shares,	
	33,769 bargains	
Gilt Index	94.42	+0.11



## Footsie cheered as NatWest predicts 4,600 next year

Shares just managed to hang on to their festive cheer with Footsie climbing to a closing high, up 9.6 points to 4,087.2.

It was, however, a typical pre-Christmas trading session with volume low and many offices content to operate with just a token workforce.

Still the undertone remained firm. With the first of the new year time dribbling into the stock market and NatWest Securities taking a positive view, hopes are high that further progress will be made over the holiday period.

NatWest has emerged as strong bulls. Strategists Boh Semple and David McBain expect Footsie to end next year at 4,600 points. And for 1998 the target is 4,800.

They believe the cheer will emerge in the second six months and say: "The tactic for the first half of 1997 will be to buy into weakness for the second-half run."

### MARKET REPORT

#### DEREK PAIN

stock market reporter of the year

OGC International, an oil services group riding at 251p in the spring, was the day's bid victim, receiving an approach "which may or may not lead to an offer". Last week Clyde Petroleum was the target of a hostile £432m bid from Gulf Canada.

Halliburton, a US services group, has approached OGC through its Brown & Root offshoot.

The US group is involved with Cairn Energy in developing the big Sangu gas field in Bangladesh.

Halliburton is meeting half the development costs in exchange for a 25 per cent equity interest in the field.

OGC jumped 41p to 116p and Cairn moved ahead 5.5p to a 416.5p peak. British-Borneo rose 16.5p to 759p and Lasso 3p to 237p.

Little Emerald Energy added 0.5p to 3.25p after announcing the start of a seismic programme in Colombia.

British Gas gained 6p to 227.5p. It has renegotiated another "take or pay" North Sea deal - this time with Mobil.

As part of the settlement, British Gas is handing some North Sea assets to Mobil.

Brake Bros, the convenience food group, was the day's big loser, off 180.5p to 576p. Profits are likely to come out at £24m against hopes of £29m and last year's £27.1m. Problems at its Puritan Maid offshoot did the damage.

Matthew Clark, the cider and wine group, gained 6p to 262.5p as B&W put forward as a possible bidder and Majestic Wine, floated last month at 160p, attracted a touch of seasonal cheer, hubbub 17p higher to 234.5p.

Allied Domecq recovered 14.5p to 439.5p with market maker Lehman Brothers said to be short of stock.

Lehman also declared a surprisingly high 13.5 per cent dividend in Acorn Computer, little changed at 195p.

Harper International, the hotel group, climbed 12p to 129.5p as Albert E Sharp's fund management arm took its stake to 3.54 per cent.

Guinness Peat, the financial group which built a stake in garage business Gowring and attempted a bid, continues to develop a taste for Young & Co., the family-controlled Wandsworth brewery. It has lifted its interest in the non-voting shares to 11.35 per cent. The price held at 620p.

Caspian, which owns Leeds United, rose 4p to a peak of 44.5p.

### Taking Stock

David Abell, who sold the Suter mini conglomerate to Ascor Holdings in the summer, could have designs on Thomas Jordan, the Corby trouser press group.

He has acquired a 2.8 per cent interest and family and friends account for a further 1.7 per cent. Jordan, which returned to profit last year, rose 4p to 26.5p.

Eurowin is selling its main slot blasting business for nearly £13m. It will concentrate on its industrial knives operation.

The deal leaves the company with cash worth around 70p a share. With the Villiers engineering group sitting on 15.3 per cent and looking acquisitive, Eurowin may feel obliged to quickly locate a takeover target. Its shares jumped 21.5p to 76.5p; they were floated at 141p two years ago.

Share Price Data									
Prices are in sterling except where stated. The yield is last year's dividend, grossed up by 20 per cent, as a percentage of the share price. The price/earnings (P/E) ratio is the share price divided by last year's earnings per share, excluding exceptional items. Other details: Ex-Gratia Dividend and Ex-Gratia Special Dividend (if any) are shown in pence. Source: FT Information									
High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Yld	P/E	High	Low	Stock
100	100	FTSE 100	4087.2	+9.6			100	100	FTSE 250
100	100	FTSE 350	2028.1	+4.4			100	100	SEAQ VOLUME
100	100	Gilt Index	94.42	+0.11			100	100	UK Corporate News
The Independent Index									
The index above you to access real-time share prices by phone from London Stock Exchange. Simply dial 0800 123 333, and when prompted do so enter the 4-digit code printed next to each share. To access the latest financial reports dial 0800 1233 followed by one of the two-digit codes below.									
FTSE 100 - Real-time	00	Starting Point	04	Prevention Issues	36				
UK Corporate News	01	Wall St Report	20	Electricity Shares	40				
Foreign Exchange	02	Wall St Report	21	High Street Banks	41				
Anyone with a tone-dial telephone can use this service. For a detailed description of the Independent Index, including its portfolio facility, phone 0800 123 333. For statistics, call our helpline 077 879 4078 (9am - 5pm). Call charges include VAT. Calls cost 50p per minute (day rate), and 40p at all other times. Call charges include VAT.									
High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Yld	P/E	High	Low	Stock
100	100	Banking	100	100	100	100	100	100	Banking
100	100	Insurance	100	100	100	100	100	100	Insurance
100	100	Health Care	100	100	100	100	100	100	Health Care
100	100	Household Goods	100	100	100	100	100	100	Household Goods
100	100	Oil Exploration	100	100	100	100	100	100	Oil Exploration
100	100	Oil Integrated	100	100	100	100	100	100	Oil Integrated
100	100	Other Financial	100	100	100	100	100	100	Other Financial
100	100	Leisure & Hotels	100	100	100	100	100	100	Leisure & Hotels
100	100	Pharmaceuticals	100	100	100	100	100	100	Pharmaceuticals
100	100	Printing & Paper	100	100	100	100	100	100	Printing & Paper
100	100	Property	100	100	100	100	100	100	Property
100	100	Longs	100	100	100	100	100	100	Longs
100	100	Alcoholic Beverages	100	100	100	100	100	100	Alcoholic Beverages
100	100	Government Securities	100	100	100	100	100	100	Government Securities
100	100	Medicines	100	100	100	100	100	100	Medicines
100	100	Shorts	100	100	100	100	100	100	Shorts
100	100	Index-linked	100	100	100	100	100	100	Index-linked
100	100	Unlisted	100	100	100	100	100	100	Unlisted

Dr. V. K. S. S.



# The new problem that is thousands of years old



Hamish McRae

Companies can be a brass plate in Liechtenstein and operate offshore, but the people who own them have to have a home. And they can be tracked

"And it came to pass in those days that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed, and everyone into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee out of the city of Nazareth into Judea unto the city of David which is called Bethlehem..." Luke, Chapter 2.

Had it not been for an effort by a supernatural authority, concerned about the difficulties of collecting tax from economic migrants, Joseph and his pregnant wife would have been able to stay in Nazareth, and the story of the Nativity would have been rather different.

At the weekend, Mr Jürgen Stark, a finance ministry state secretary in Germany, said that Bonn was planning a campaign against "tax havens" in the EU, singling out the UK. It seems that British tax rules are one of the reasons why investment bankers, including many Germans, operate from London instead of Frankfurt.

Germany is not proposing that Germans resident in London should have to return to their native cities to be taxed, though it would be a sight easier to hop on a plane back to Frankfurt than to trek down from Nazareth to Bethlehem, half a day's car ride even today. But Germany's concern is similar to that of Caesar Augustus. If you have a common currency with high levels of labour mobility it is hard to avoid inefficiencies in the tax system. Two millennia ago the problem was tracking people; now it is the multiplicity of different tax regimes. We can, to some extent, fix the old problem, but because the world is less unified, we have a problem that they did not have to tackle, the lack of a common tax authority.

In the years ahead this is going to get worse. All high-tax countries are desperately concerned about economic migration. Germany is concerned about the loss of jobs to eastern Europe, partly a function

of lower wages, but more one of less onerous social security and tax payments. I was in Sweden last week, and it was pointed out that all the high-profile Swedish sports stars lived outside the country. But at the moment we are only seeing a tiny change, for only a relatively small group of people are free to choose their location. As electronic communications develop, and as an increasing proportion of the world's labour force works on-screen, the proportion of workers who are free to locate anywhere will rise. We already have an element of tax competition within the EU, seeking to attract new business investment with grants and tax breaks. Are we moving to a world where tax competition extends to individuals and becomes a major way in which countries compete?

Some people have gone

even further than this, and started to ponder whether the Internet creates a world where companies and people can locate themselves beyond the bounds of any national authority. Of course humans have to be physically located somewhere, companies can be a brass plate in Liechtenstein and have all their operations offshore, but the people who own them have to have a home. And they can be tracked. The advance of electronics, which brings us this freedom of location, also makes it easier for Caesar Augustus to find us.

But the combination of mobility and electronics is likely to cut away government revenues over the next generation - it is the principal force which seems likely to cause the downsizing of government. To many this may appear welcome, but there is the disturbing possibility that governments simply will not have the revenue necessary to perform their basic functions. This raises two obvious questions. What can governments do to protect revenue? And is there a bedrock of taxation which will not disappear, come what may?

On the first, the key element will be the degree of international co-operation that governments can develop. Within the EU there ought to be some room for holding tax rates within broad bands, but the scope will be more limited than people like Mr Stark would like. Quite aside from the obvious political difficulty of a country accepting a tax rate decided by voters in another, there is the practical difficulty that there are several places in western Europe which are not members of the EU: not just Switzerland and Norway, but also places like the Channel Islands.

In any case the chief competition for the EU countries will not increasingly be from within the EU, but from outside it. Economic power is inevitably shifting to East Asia. It is very hard to see a government in China being par-

ticularly sympathetic to charges from Europe that its taxation policies are unfair. Even if it were possible to co-ordinate EU taxation, that would not be enough. Indeed it might simply put the European time-zone at a disadvantage compared to the other two zones: America and East Asia.

So, while there may be grounds for some international co-operation on tax, it would be unwise to expect too much. An alternative way forward would be that adopted by the United States, which taxes its citizens wherever they live world-wide. In theory any country concerned about tax leakage because of its citizens moving abroad could think of doing that. But in practice it would be very difficult for other countries, if only because the attractions of being a citizen of almost any other country are weaker. In the case of Germany there would be the further complication that nationality is by blood - by ancestry - rather than by birth.

The best protection of government revenues, surely, comes on the other side, the spending side. Countries with very high public services are unattractive places for either people or businesses to locate.

In any case there is surely a bedrock of taxation which will remain. This includes property taxes; a reasonable level of sales taxes; fuel and power taxation; some (maybe quite modest) level of income tax. Even on pessimistic assumptions, a country ought to be able to raise taxation equivalent to, say, 25 per cent of GDP, at least for another generation.

But as the demand for skilled people rises and as these people are free to move around more and more, the downward pressure on taxation will continue. Expect more concern about "unfair" taxation, and increasing efforts to make people pay tax in their cities of their lineage, even if future tax authorities will not force people to go back there to pay it.

# Maintenance problems drag Inspirations to £13m loss

Tom Stevenson  
City Editor

The holiday industry reporting season crash-ended yesterday as Inspirations reported a £13.2m loss for the year to September. The tour operator, Britain's fourth largest, used its results to hit back at speculation that its credit lines were being scrutinised by the Civil Aviation Authority and said it had no plans to sell its 97 AT Mays travel agencies.

The denial scotched a rumour that Carlson, the US travel group, was poised to buy the outlets which already manages in order to inject much-needed funds into Inspirations' balance sheet. A company spokesman said that, with net cash of £42m,

Inspirations had no trouble complying with the CAA's bonding requirements which insist on credit lines being available to get holidaymakers home in the event of a corporate crash.

The troubled holiday company has been in a tailspin since maintenance problems with its Caledonian Airways subsidiary in the summer caused delays and disruption valued yesterday at £19.5m. Putting a figure on the damage finally drew a line under a disastrous three-month period for the company during which two profits warnings contributed to a halving in its share price.

Inspirations said it had struck a compensation deal with British Airways Engineering, the airline's maintenance arm which

failed to deliver Inspirations' planes to an agreed timetable, causing disruption to the tour operator's summer schedule. BA will make a payment of £1.6m to Caledonian and subscribe to preference shares worth £4.4m in Inspirations.

BA said yesterday: "British Airways Engineering has acknowledged that there were occasions when engineering work had taken longer than anticipated but safety is paramount and neither Caledonian Airways nor British Airways would ever allow this safety to be compromised."

Inspirations shares closed yesterday 1p higher at 75.5p, above their recent low of 66.5p but well below the 152.5p reached in August.

The heavy loss recorded last year compared with a profit of £7.7m in the 12 months to September 1995 and was struck from sharply higher sales of £403.2m (£336.1m). There was a loss per share of 27.7p (earnings of 18.4p) and no dividend is to be paid.

A spokesman said 1996 had got off to a good start and good trading had soon resumed after September's difficulties.

Inspirations' figures bring to an end a mixed reporting season for Britain's quoted holiday companies. Airtrics profits took off with its share price but First Choice took the opportunity of appointing a new chief executive to slash its dividend by a quarter, despite reporting higher profits.

# Lucas Varity director quits

Michael Harrison

The US struggle over LucasVarity, the Anglo-American car components group, grew tighter yesterday after John Grant, its British finance director, quit with a payoff worth about £576,000.

Mr Grant, who had been at Lucas for four years, is being replaced by Neil Arnold, who was chief financial officer at Varity for six years before being put in charge of corporate development when the two companies merged. Mr Arnold will not be on the board of LucasVarity, meaning that the company's only executive director now is its chief executive, Victor Rice, the former head of Varity.

The group denied that Mr Grant had clashed with Mr Rice or that they had fallen out over group strategy, which involves shedding 3,000 workers and disposing of 13 subsidiaries, all of them former Lucas businesses, over the next two years. A spokesman said the board had decided to terminate Mr



Gone: John Grant received a payoff worth £576,000

Grant's contract because it seemed "someone who was more global in orientation and more experienced".

Mr Grant was on a two-year rolling contract and received a salary, including perks and pension entitlements, of £288,000 in the year to the end of July. The spokesman said his contract, which was terminated last Friday, would be met in full. News of Mr Grant's departure sent shares in LucasVarity 6p lower to 226.5p.

## IN BRIEF

• British Gas said it would transfer stakes in some of its North Sea production and transportation assets to Mobil in exchange for new terms on high-priced supply contracts with the US oil and gas company. The UK gas supplier said two long-term supply contracts, which had forced it to buy gas above market rates, would be terminated.

• Life, the London futures and options exchange, will set up its new trading floor and offices at a site in Spitalfields, in a deal guaranteed by the City Corporation. The exchange, which is growing quickly, had looked at six possible venues, one of which was at Canary Wharf, in the London Docklands area.

• Clyde Petroleum rejected Gulf Canada's £432m approach yesterday, saying: "This opportunistic offer gains no credibility from the highly selective statistics used by Gulf Canada. These statistics ignore the real value of Clyde, as Clyde management and its financial advisers will demonstrate to shareholders."

• Burnfield said yesterday it had rejected an informal approach from Fairway of a slightly higher all-paper offer because it represented only a small increase on the existing one-for-four terms and was contingent on an existing 135p-a-share cash offer lapsing. Burnfield shares closed 2p higher at 143.5p.

• Net retail sales of unit trusts reached £409m in November, more than 30 per cent up on the total reached 12 months ago, and the second highest on record, according to figures from the Association of Unit Trusts and Investment Funds. Net sales of PEPs were £309m, up from £283m in October and £273m at the same time last year.

• Amersham International has bought an Italian radiopharmaceutical business from Sorin Biomedica in an £11m deal that completes its present acquisition plans in Europe. The Italian company, based in Turin, made £1.6m last year on sales of £13m and is the market leader in southern Europe.

## Foreign Exchange Rates

Country	Spot	1 month	3 months	D-Mark	Spot	1 month	3 months
US	166.67	8.6	36.38	1000	26.22	26.22	26.22
Canada	227.86	54.49	34.28	1367.2	75.73	75.73	75.73
Germany	21.88	89.81	203.83	1353.8	30.37	30.37	30.37
France	6.452	27.78	640.68	5.2470	86.61	289.26	50.00
Italy	254.01	31.45	103.23	1528.2	28.35	31.40	31.40
Japan	163.91	10.00	10.00	161.7	49.47	148.17	734.32
EU	134.10	21.45	66.61	1290.2	32.74	44.45	158.88
Denmark	55.33	222.17	855.59	259.00	56.79	229.27	382.91
Netherlands	20.958	62.74	240.225	124.35	39.37	121.15	122.01
Norway	11.782	80.40	380.270	64.889	50.25	18.69	18.69
Sweden	28.08	5.13	5.13	5.13	23.31	84.2075	84.2075
Switzerland	153.20	60.18	100.00	153.20	60.18	100.00	100.00
Australia	22.227	65.76	238.225	133.54	40.37	18.74	18.74
South Africa	20.996	10.18	10.18	12.579	14.16	33.33	33.33
Hong Kong	12.886	89.22	240.270	72.03	2.27	49.793	49.793
Malaysia	42.03	0.0	0.0	22.991	27.30	80.85	80.85
New Zealand	23.58	64.71	133.38	14.781	54.38	97.99	97.99
Saudi Arabia	62.910	0.0	0.0	17.025	1.4	5.9	5.9
Singapore	23.327	0.0	0.0	13.996	24.18	70.45	70.45

## Other Spot Rates

Country	Sterling	Dollar	Country	Sterling	Dollar
Argentina	165.64	0.0095	Nigeria	133.043	79.000
Australia	16.2227	0.00932	Oman	0.049	0.0389
Brazil	17.039	0.0092	Pakistan	66.522	0.0389
Canada	13.839	0.009270	Philippines	43.622	0.0389
China	5.5822	0.0092	Portugal	20.089	0.0389
France	77.770	0.0092	Spain	16.589	0.0389
Germany	20.958	0.0092	South Africa	27.08	0.0389
Greece	42.048	0.0092	Switzerland	62.910	0.0389
India	52.910	0.0092	UAE	62.910	0.0389
Italy	0.0092	0.0092			

Forward rates quoted high to low are at a discount; added to spot rate. Rates quoted low to high are at a premium; added to spot rate. \*Dollar rates quoted as reciprocals. For the latest foreign exchange rates call 0891 123 3033. Calls cost 50p per minute (day rate) 45p other times.

## Interest Rates

UK	600%	Germany	250%	US	875%	Japan	050%
Base	5.00%	Discount	4.00%	Discount	5.00%	Discount	2.50%
France	3.5%	Prime	4.75%	Prime	5.25%	Prime	3.00%
Interbank	7.5%	Discount	5.00%	Discount	5.00%	Discount	1.00%
Advances	2.50%	Discount	3.25%	Repo (1w)	4.17	Repo (1w)	4.17

## Bond Yields

Country	5yr	10yr	15yr	20yr	Country	5yr	10yr	15yr	20yr
UK	7.7%	7.2%	7.1%	7.1%	Netherlands	8.4%	4.8%	6.0%	6.7%
US	5.1%	6.1%	6.05%	6.2%	Spain	8.0%	8.0%	8.0%	8.0%
Japan	5.1%	1.42	3.1%	2.4%	Italy	8.2%	8.2%	8.2%	8.2%
Australia	8.7%	4.7%	4.7%	4.7%	Belgium	5%	4.8%	7%	7%
Germany	8.2%	4.8%	6.2%	5.8%	Sweden	7%	5.5%	0.7%	0.7%
France	7.0%	4.8%	6.3%	4.7%	ECU Swap	0%	4.8%	7%	0.1%

## Money Market Rates

Overnight	7 Day	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	1 Year
Interbank	5.4%	5.4%	5.4%	5.4%	5.4%
Local Authority	5.4%	5.4%	5.4%	5.4%	5.4%
Discount Market	5.4%	5.4%	5.4%	5.4%	5.4%
ECU (Euro)	5.4%	5.4%	5.4%	5.4%	5.4%
ECU (Euro)	5.4%	5.4%	5.4%	5.4%	5.4%

## Tourist Rates

Country	Rate	Country	Rate	Country	Rate
Australia	22.820	France	22.820	Germany	22.820
Canada	22.820	Italy	22.820	Japan	22.820
China	22.820	Netherlands	22.820	Spain	22.820
India	22.820	Sweden	22.820	Switzerland	22.820
South Africa	22.820	UAE	22.820	US	22.820

## Life Financial Futures

Contract	Settlement	High/Low	Open	Close
Long Bond	10.28	10.25	10.31	10.31
Short Bond	10.28	10.25	10.31	10.31
3 Mth Euro	10.28	10.25	10.31	10.31
3 Mth Euro	10.28	10.25	10.31	10.31
3 Mth Euro	10.28	10.25	10.31	10.31
3 Mth Euro	10.28	10.25	10.31	10.31
3 Mth Euro	10.28	10.25	10.31	10.31
3 Mth Euro	10.28	10.25	10.31	10.31
3 Mth Euro	10.28	10.25	10.31	10.31
3 Mth Euro	10.28	10.25	10.31	10.31

## Life FTSE Index Option

Jan	103/8	03/29	94/50	14/81	..
Feb	08/38	02/53	71/73	47/100	..
Mar	153/63	118/50	92/102	88/126	..
Apr	186/79	136/58	121/121	88/146	..

Energy		Crude		WTI		Products	
Brent	(\$/barrel)	Gas oil	(\$/tonne)	WTI	(\$/tonne)	Spot	CFM NW Europe
FEB 530PM	\$/bbl Yr ago	FE	\$/bbl	6pm			
Jan	23.22	Jan	215.0	Feb	24.85	Prm.Unlimited	221/224
Mar	22.63	Feb	210.5	Mar	24.50	Heptan.	213/216
Apr	22.8	Mar	205.2	Apr	23.95	EG Gasoil	208/29
	-0.48	Vol	505.25	May	22.58	Heavy Fuel	131/174
Vol	17334	Index	23.68				

## Commodity Indices

Index	Value	Index	Value	Index	Value
Industrial	2700-100	2700-100	2700-100	2700-100	2700-100
Agricultural	2700-100	2700-100	2700-100	2700-100	2700-100
Energy	2700-100	2700-100	2700-100	2700-100	2700-100
Metals	2700-100	2700-100	2700-100	2700-100	2700-100
Grains	2700-100	2700-100	2700-100	2700-100	2700-100
Softs	2700-100	2700-100	2700-100	2700-100	2700-100
Oil	2700-100	2700-100	2700-100	2700-100	2700-100
Gold	2700-100	2700-100	2700-100	2700-100	2700-100
Silver	2700-100	2700-100	2700-100	2700-100	2700-100
Palladium	2700-100	2700-100	2700-100	2700-100	2700-100

## Industrial Metals

Shore	Cash	3 mths	Value	London Metal Exchange	chg
Aluminium	1507.75	1540.41	44342	949575	+ 6350
Copper	2100	2100	45	2100	+ 400
Lead	2046.47	2146.49	30781	10540	+ 2075
Nickel	708.4	707.75	8291	18350	+ 3275
Platinum	6558.5	6700.1	1331	45338	+ 488
Tin	5720.4	5765.70	3388	10470	+ 680
Zinc	1085.38	1085.42	10082	55273	+ 1275

## Precious Metals

Settlement	Conversion	Settlement	Conversion	Settlement	Conversion
Settlement	Conversion	Settlement	Conversion	Settlement	Conversion
Settlement	Conversion	Settlement	Conversion	Settlement	Conversion
Settlement	Conversion	Settlement	Conversion	Settlement	Conversion
Settlement	Conversion	Settlement	Conversion	Settlement	Conversion
Settlement	Conversion	Settlement	Conversion	Settlement	Conversion
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Settlement	Conversion	Settlement	Conversion	Settlement	Conversion
Settlement	Conversion	Settlement	Conversion	Settlement	Conversion
Settlement	Conversion	Settlement	Conversion	Settlement	Conversion

## Agricultural

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**1997**

# Yorke tips Villa for tilt at the title

## Football

Dwight Yorke thinks he and Aston Villa have found their form at just the right moment for the club to launch a serious assault on the Premier League title.

Yorke scored 25 goals last season but he failed to find the net in the opening nine games of the current campaign as Villa's fairly slow start to the season included their exit from the Uefa Cup at the hands of the part-timers of Helsingborg.

The Trinidad and Tobago international has put that disappointment and his country's early World Cup exit behind him with 11 goals in the last 12 games to help push Villa into the Premiership top four.

Yorke thinks he and Villa are coming right in time for a three-week schedule that will take in matches against Chelsea, Arsenal, Manchester United, Newcastle and Liverpool. "There was a lot of expectation on me to produce from the start of this season after the standards I set last year and that's better than people not being interested in me or not talking about you," he said.

"Everybody was looking towards me to produce week in and week out, which is fair enough, but the goals just wouldn't come at first. There were a couple of efforts which might have been over the line, like the one at Everton, but they weren't given and I was also hitting the woodwork. The ball just wouldn't go in the net.

"You get frustrating spells like that from time to time as a striker but I never lost faith in my ability. I knew if I kept working hard things would change and the staff and lads kept encouraging me. The hat-trick at Newcastle was a tremendous boost to me, even though it was disappointing to lose, and things have gone on from there in terms of the goals going in."

Yorke, who scored twice in the 5-0 demolition of Wimbledon on Sunday, is under no illusions as to the importance of the run of games facing Villa. "We are coming into an exciting period where we play all the big boys. We know we haven't



The Chilean Marcelo Salas (right) shields the ball from Independiente's Jorge Martinez during River Plate's 3-1 defeat in an Argentinian league match

Photograph: Reuters

played to our full potential but this will be the time to come good," he said. "It definitely is a crucial spell for us. This could be a make or break time but if we get through this spell in decent shape then we will be in with a heck of a good chance.

"The good thing for us is that, although we didn't start the season particularly well, we showed a lot of character in

clawing our way back into the title hunt. We've got the consistency factor back into our play and the confidence has also started to flow back. I don't see any reason why we shouldn't be thinking of winning the championship. The players here all know what they are capable of."

Until they met Villa, Wimbledon had been bowling along towards the top themselves,

thanks to an unbeaten run of 19 matches. Their manager, Joe Kinnear, is maintaining an upbeat approach and challenged his players to put what he described as a "blip" behind them by bouncing back against West Ham on Boxing Day.

"I certainly won't be over-reacting to what happened on Sunday. The trick is to bounce back and to get on to another

run," he said. "I'm disappointed it ended but we'll still enjoy Christmas because it's been a fantastic sequence of results."

Bert Paton, the Dunfermline manager, began his Christmas having to defend Marc Millar as the player faces up to a five-match suspension. Millar will miss almost the whole of January, but Paton said: "I don't know how Marc has this bad dis-

ciplinary record because he's not that kind of player."

Millar, who scored a penalty in a 3-2 victory at Motherwell over the weekend, also picked up a booking that took him over the next disciplinary threshold and he will serve a five-match ban from 4 January.

Millar will miss games against Aberdeen (away), Dundee United (home), Kilmarnock (away),

the Scottish Cup third round and the rearranged home fixture with Celtic on 29 January.

"It is a blow to us because Marc has been playing well in recent weeks," Paton said. "We were playing him at the back and that was landing him in trouble with tackles. But in midfield he's done better and hadn't been booked for several weeks until Fir Park."

## Arsenal's Wright appeal

ADAM SZRETER

Arsenal have submitted an official complaint to the Football Association about Ian Wright's sending-off at Nottingham Forest on Saturday.

The club has made a claim of "wrongful dismissal" to Lancaster Gate. The referee, Stephen Lodge and his assistant, John Holbrook, will now be sent a video of the incident, in which the Arsenal defender barged into the Forest defender Nikola Jerkan, who then fell to the ground.

An FA spokeswoman said: "We will be asking for their observations before deciding what action to take." Lodge dismissed Wright for violent conduct, which carries an automatic three-match ban. But he said he would be prepared to look at the video, providing the request came from the FA.

After a poll of European football writers for France Football, Alan Shearer was yesterday placed third behind the winner, Germany's Matthias Sammer, and Barcelona's Brazilian international Ronaldo in the Golden Ball award, otherwise known as European Footballer of the Year. Sammer gained 144 points, Ronaldo 141 and Shearer 107. Eric Cantona was seventh.

Ilie Dumitrescu's unhappy stay at West Ham appears to be over. The Romanian is believed to have signed a three-year contract with the Mexican side America Ciudad, but the deal and fee are still to be finalised.

Kenny Dalglish was yesterday confirmed as a scout for Rangers, but he will not be on the three-payroll. Dalglish was appointed assistant development manager for a company run by the Rangers chairman, David Murray. Carnegie Sports International.

One of his duties will be helping to recruit players for Rangers. Gavin Peacock has joined Queen's Park Rangers from Chelsea. The 29-year-old midfielder, on loan at Loftus Road for the past month, has signed for a fee of £800,000 which will rise to £1m after a certain number of appearances.

Sepp Blatter, secretary general of Fifa, football's world governing body, has urged Terry Venables' Australia to bid against England, among others, for the 2006 World Cup. Blatter, in Australia to discuss the 2000 Olympic Games football tournament, said: "If Australia has the courage to get the Olympic Games, it should also have the courage and initiative to ask for the World Cup."

Bobby Williamson last night stepped up from reserve team manager to take charge of Kilmarnock as their new manager until the end of the season.

## County make club captain the caretaker

Notts County yesterday followed the lead set by their Premiership neighbours, Nottingham Forest, by appointing their captain as their caretaker manager.

County, next to bottom of the Second Division, have sacked the managerial pair of Colin Murphy and Steve Thompson. The chairman, Derek Pavis, who had dismissed reports that the Plymouth manager, Neil Warnock, was to return to Meadow Lane, promoted the captain, Gary Stroder, who will link with the club's record signing, Tony Agut. Murphy and Thompson are the sixth managerial casualties in Pavis's nine-year reign.

The move comes after Forest handed the responsibility for team affairs to Stuart Pearce last Friday after Frank Clark had resigned.

## Ravanelli rocks the boat

Fabrizio Ravanelli has accused Premiership clubs of having inadequate training facilities and substandard coaching methods.

Middlesbrough's expensive Italian import has taken a swipe at English football in general and his own club in particular, claiming he has to train alone, using charts supplied by Juventus.

Ravanelli said: "Here there is a different culture and a different mentality. The English have tons of money but they lack the organisation of Italian soccer."

His remarks on an Italian TV sports show are certain to enrage his manager Bryan Robson, who is anxious to maintain dressing-room harmony after 12 League matches without a win.

The 28-year-old Italian international, signed for £7m in the summer, said: "The training facilities are not adequate. The stadiums are nice but the rest is just not there."

"For example, there are no gyms and you don't practice very much. I am forced to train by myself, using charts that the Juve trainer faxes to me. English players have a natural gift for running but as for closeness and reaction time they can't match the Italians. In soccer you have to do more than run."

Ravanelli's top earner on a reported £42,000 a week, has scored 16 goals so far after marking his debut with a hat-trick against Liverpool. But he is now clearly unhappy at being dragged into the relegation quicksand after a bright beginning.

The White Feather has been linked with Manchester United and he admits: "I want to win again. We are in a difficult situation and one I did not expect. Before signing with Middlesbrough, promises were made to me and they have not been kept."

"Now we have to regroup and I have to bring the mentality I learned at Juve. We have to find a way out of this situation."

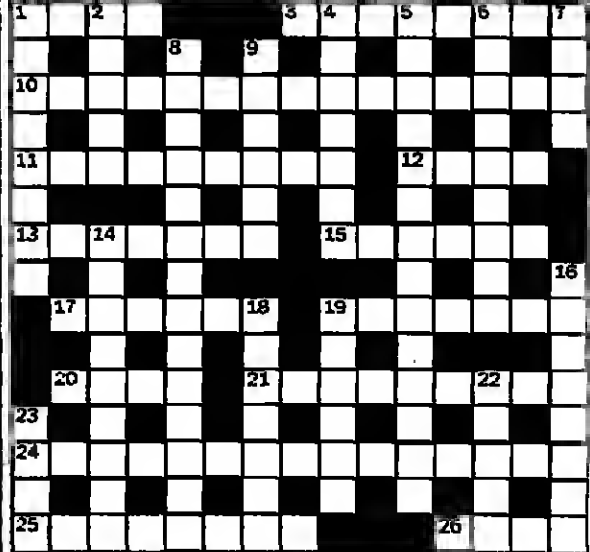
No one at Middlesbrough was available yesterday to comment on Ravanelli's remarks.

The Barcelona coach, Bobby Robson, has said Middlesbrough had increased their offer for the Spanish international defender Miguel Angel Nadal. "They've offered a lot of money for Nadal, but I don't know if Barcelona will accept the offer, or if it interests Nadal," the former England manager said.

## THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No 3178, Tuesday 24 December

By Aquila



Monday's Solution

1. SANDY (4)  
2. REUNION (6)  
3. SHIPWRECK (8)  
4. NEGLECTIBLE (10)  
5. ETONIAN (12)  
6. VARIETY (14)  
7. FLAT (16)  
8. FARMWORKER (18)  
9. COACH (20)  
10. COUNTER (22)  
11. SHAPED (24)  
12. EMPLOYER (26)  
13. PLOW (28)  
14. SPOTS (30)  
15. FEATURES (15)  
16. LEVEL (17)  
17. GIRL (19)  
18. BOY (21)  
19. EQUIPMENT (23)  
20. BUNCH (25)  
21. OLD (27)  
22. CURE (29)  
23. £500 (31)  
24. HANKY-PANKY (33)  
25. ONE (35)  
26. APPOINTMENT (37)  
27. TRAINED (39)  
28. ONE (41)  
29. BOTTOM (43)  
30. LIGHTER (45)  
31. SPOTS (47)

## Cup draw has big guns pointing head to head

### Rugby Union

CHRIS HEWITT

Michael Lynagh may be able to control a rugby ball better than virtually anyone in the world, but when it comes to picking numbers out of a hat he is just as susceptible to the fates as the rest of us.

Australia's former captain not only gave his club, Saracens, a Pilkington Cup headache yesterday but inflicted a similar condition on almost every other team with a realistic chance of reaching Twickenham in May.

Lynagh spared only one of the Cup favourites in concocting the most competitive sixth-round draw imaginable - Harlequins, 5-2 front runners for the knock-out title, will visit rank outsiders Rotherham on 25 January. Most of the remaining ties will be pure theatre. After pairing Saracens with their north London neighbours Wasps, Lynagh wreaked havoc by sending Leicester to Bath for a repeat of last season's final. Bristol to Gloucester and Sale to Orrell. Not even Northampton will feel confident at home to Derek Eves' awkward squad from League Two.

With two all-Second Division ties, a couple of dark horses are certain to make the

quarter-finals. Newcastle, a real danger if their demolition of West Hartlepool last Sunday was anything to go by, will expect to see off London Scottish while Wakefield, who gave Bath a torrid time at the last-16 stage last season, should pack too much attacking weaponry for Moseley.

Bath-Leicester is a certain sell-out, but there is a degree of doubt over the date. If the Tigers beat Toulouse in the Heineken European Cup semi-final at Welford Road on Saturday week, the final, scheduled for 25 January, will force a postponement. Bath, already beaten by the Midlandsers in the league this season, have lost only one home Cup tie in 12 years - against Leicester in 1991.

There will be every bit as much venom at Kingsholm, especially as Gloucester and Bristol have been thrown together in a life or death battle against relegation. Yesterday's announcement by the Rugby Football Union that four sides will disappear automatically through the trap-door at the end of the season rather than three, as originally agreed, has left the traditional West Country giants vulnerable to the unthinkable.

Predictably, neither club was inclined to send seasonal greetings to the RFU yesterday. Alan

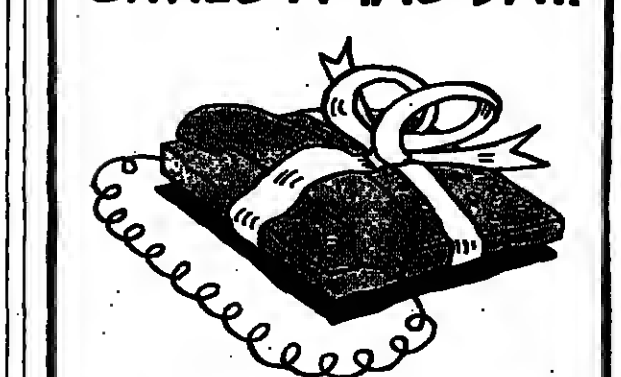
Davies, the Bristol coach, described the decision as "barney" and claimed it would damage the development of rugby in England while his counterpart at Gloucester, Richard Hill, dug deeper into the dictionary and came out with "disgusting". Hill, an England A coach this season, accused the RFU ofkowtowing to big money clubs in the Second Division who have been lobbying hard for two promotion places.

Worryingly from the point of view of club solidarity, the Leicester chief executive, Peter Wheeler, yesterday came down firmly behind Gloucester and Bristol, arguing that any change to the relegation rules should have been jointly discussed by representatives of both the governing body and the clubs.

At least the Welsh appear to have solved their differences. Referee who staged an unprecedented strike last weekend and effectively wiped out the entire senior league programme yesterday accepted a revised pay package from the Welsh Rugby Union. They will now be paid on a sliding scale backdated to late August, with First Division fixtures commanding a £125 fee.

PILKINGTON CUP Sixth-round draw: Saracens v Rotherham; Rotherham v Harlequins; Bath v Leicester; Wakefield v Moseley; Gloucester v Bristol; London Scottish v Newcastle; Northampton v Coventry; Orrell v Sale (Ties to be played on Saturday, 25 January).

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